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General Assembly

Sixtieth session

Official Records

12th plenary meeting
Sunday, 18 September 2005, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jan Eliasson ..... (Sweden)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Organization of work

The President: Before giving the floor to the first speaker for this meeting, I should like once again to remind members that statements made in the general debate have a time limit of 15 minutes. In that connection, I should like once again to appeal earnestly to Member States to limit their statements to 15 minutes so that all the speakers inscribed on the list for each meeting can be accommodated within the projected time frame. I thank members for their understanding and cooperation.

Address by Mr. Elías Antonio Saca González, President of the Republic of El Salvador

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of El Salvador.

Mr. Elías Antonio Saca González, President of the Republic of El Salvador, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Elías Antonio Saca González, President of the Republic of El Salvador, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Saca González (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to begin, Mr. President, by congratulating you on your election to lead our work during this session. We wish you full success during your presidency. Likewise, our gratitude goes to His Excellency Mr Jean Ping for his work during his mandate. We also extend our heartfelt thanks to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his devotion as head of the Organization.

The anniversary we are now celebrating should inspire an appreciation of the importance of dialogue among all the nations represented here in achieving collective well-being. Above all, we must recognize the challenges ahead. We all know that our Organization is passing through a crucial moment in its existence. We can either strengthen it or weaken it. I reaffirm the commitment of my Government to participate significantly in pursuing the reform process, in particular in substantive areas in which we have yet to achieve agreement and which are essential for successful reform of our Organization.

The historic process in El Salvador has shown that lasting peace and democracy cannot exist without development and respect for human rights. My administration is doing everything possible to maintain a humanistic form of government focusing on people and their expectations and placing economic and social development at the heart of our programmes.

As a developing country, however, we are constrained by limited natural, technical and financial resources. Sometimes, these limitations are increased as the result of natural events and other external factors such as the increase in oil prices which is truly devastating to our economies.

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At last year's General Assembly session, we expressed the need to find solutions to the impact of oil prices on economies. Since then, we have witnessed with great concern that the prices of hydrocarbon products, far from dropping or stabilizing, have spiralled excessively as never before. This situation not only seriously affects our development efforts because of the high oil bills, which lead us to divert funds that could be used for social programmes, but also has become a serious threat to social and political stability and human security, primarily in the least developed and other developing countries.

In addition to those conditions and other factors related to instability and price speculation, there is a growing trend to exclude middle-low-income countries from assistance and international cooperation, further limiting the ability of those States to meet the challenge of development and in particular of achieving the Millennium Development Goals. We firmly believe that the United Nations must discuss this issue with due seriousness and responsibility in order to find joint and supportive solutions that will help mitigate the crisis we are facing.

I propose that the Department of Economic and Social Affairs or the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean carry out a study on the impact of increased oil prices on achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and on national development efforts worldwide.

Although South-South cooperation has become a valuable instrument that contributes to development, it is also important to recognize that further use should be made of North-South cooperation, in particular through creation of the Global Development Alliance, which will make it possible, through a mutually beneficial approach, to achieve economic growth and sustainable social well-being.

We feel that it is essential that as part of the comprehensive reform of our Organization we promote the strengthening and greater efficiency of funds and programmes in the operational activities of the United Nations system. Similarly, I would like to highlight the importance of setting up a just and equitable international trade system, based on predictable and non-discriminatory regulations consistent with the principles of free trade.

El Salvador is committed to achieving the Millennium Development Goals that have been set for 2015, despite external factors that affect us and limit our capacity to invest in development. With that vision in mind, El Salvador has launched its Opportunities programme aimed at improving the living conditions of thousands of Salvadorian families. It contains five basic components. The first is the Solidarity Network programme to combat poverty and extreme poverty head on, with a special role for Salvadorian women. Through the Chair of the Commission on Women, we are doing everything we can to ensure that protecting the rights of women is on the agenda. We can confirm that the participation of women in peace and development has been essential for successfully achieving our goals.

Secondly, the programme covers microcredit for developing micro and small businesses; this will promote the development of new sources of income through self-employment.

Thirdly, the Health Solidarity Fund (FOSALUD) provides for the establishment of a tax on tobacco, alcohol and firearms. Those resources will be used to expand medical services in public health units to 24 hours a day; here, we have seen excellent results.

Fourthly, the Presidential Youth Programme has begun to include young people in the development process.

Finally, our Get Connected programme is aimed at creating a model for public education that makes technology and information available to students.

It is with great hope that El Salvador is gradually moving towards achieving most of the Millennium Development Goals. For example, we reduced the number of individuals living in extreme poverty by 18 percentage points between 1991 and 2004. The percentages have gone from 33 per cent to 15 per cent, which means we have reduced the figure by half. The infant mortality rate for children under the age of one has decreased significantly, from 45 per 1,000 live births in 1991 to 25 per 1,000 in 2004: a reduction of 20 points. We need to strive for a further 10-point reduction.

Participation of young people in economic and social development is a priority. It is a source of energy and creativity that can improve our society and put us on the path to the future.

We also welcome the holding of the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, to be

held in Tunis in November 2005. We urge participants to be active in agreeing on commitments, with specific objectives that will help reduce the digital divide separating countries. Like that of the first phase, held in Geneva in 2003, the outcome of the 2005 Tunis Summit on the Information Society should reflect deep respect for freedom of expression as a pillar of democracy in order to ensure that a free and independent press continues to work unhindered throughout the world, as expressed in article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic has become a serious problem that crosses borders and does not respect nationalities. The magnitude of the spread of this epidemic has meant that we must concentrate on prevention without forgetting treatment and support for individuals living with this illness.

In El Salvador, we shall shortly host the third Forum on HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases in Latin America and the Caribbean, the fourth Central American Congress on Sexually Transmitted Infections and HIV/AIDS and the fourth Central American Meeting of People Living with HIV/AIDS in order to unite our efforts and exchange experiences. We are hoping to have support from the United Nations. We urge the entire international community, in particular the donor countries, to continue to provide their support to national efforts to combat HIV/AIDS and to reduce the costs of the medications that are available.

One of the matters that require greater interest and attention is that of migration because of its economic, social and cultural impact in countries of origin, transit and destination.

This matter should be dealt with from a multidimensional approach, one that would establish guidelines for international, regional and subregional cooperation, adopt and coordinate joint policies based on the contribution of migrants to development, as well as prevention efforts and action against illegal immigration and the trade in human beings.

One matter of particular interest to El Salvador is the scourge of national and transnational organized crime. The phenomenon of gangs is closely connected to a series of serious offences that gravely threaten the security of individuals and their assets. It also has a bearing on corruption; it reduces our people's morale and it has a negative impact on our development efforts. We believe that one of the measures that ought to be taken collectively to most effectively and efficiently combat this scourge would be to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and to enhance international cooperation.

We agree that the system to protect human rights needs to be strengthened but it is necessary to establish an objective mechanism that is transparent, de-politicized and non-discriminatory.

El Salvador fully supports the strengthening of the collective security system, with full respect for the principles of the Charter and universally recognized human rights. We recognize and appreciate the role played by peacekeeping operations. We feel it is important to continue considering the proposal of establishing a strategic military and police reserve that would allow for rapid deployment to deal with hostilities stemming from conflicts, as well as to maintain post-conflict peace and security.

We are satisfied with our contribution to collective peace with our growing participation in peacekeeping operations. In particular, we provide troops from our national civil police as a result of peace agreements worked out and signed with the United Nations.

With regard to disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, El Salvador supports the efforts aimed at reaching a global commitment to eliminate weapons of mass destruction. In this regard, we support Norway's initiative to adopt a declaration on disarmament and security.

As to the situation in the Middle East, we wish to express our gratitude to the Government of Israel for carrying out its disengagement plan, a unilateral measure that will conclude with the total withdrawal of the Israeli presence from the Gaza Strip. This is a show of political will and the desire to put a lasting end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We believe that continuing to adopt measures to generate mutual trust will enable both parties to resume the peace process, as set out in the road map. Similarly, we reiterate our support for the right of the Palestinian people to establish an independent State, as well as the right of the Israeli people to live in peace and security, free from any terrorist threat from radical groups outside the law.

With respect to the situation in Iraq, we trust that all political forces will participate in setting up new institutions for Iraq and that there will be an understanding which will lead to the establishment of a state of law based on representative democracy.

One of the pending items on the international agenda that we must not disregard is the situation related to Taiwan and its inclusion in the concert of nations. We believe that the United Nations must look into the question of Taiwan, because it is a reality that we cannot ignore, since the representation of the Taiwanese people internationally is a responsibility of this Organization, in accordance with its universal principles and purposes. Similarly, we hope that there will be peaceful coexistence on both sides of the Taiwan Strait.

I now wish to refer to the question of natural disasters and the high level of vulnerability to which all of our nations are exposed, as seen by the tragic events that took place recently in various parts of the world, and most recently in the United States. This should lead us to rethink and reassess our commitments and our decisions with respect to the environmental situation in which we find ourselves. On behalf of the Government and people of El Salvador, I wish to express our most sincere condolences and our show of solidarity to all families who lost loved ones and valuables as a result of these phenomena, and we urge the community of nations to pay greater attention to the environment.

Finally, I simply wish to point out that our people firmly believe and hope that the United Nations is and will be an Organization that has legitimacy and the capacity to contribute to the attainment of peace, security, freedom, sustainable development and the promotion of human rights. Our role as heads of State and Government is to strengthen this belief and this hope, showing that we can work together in a united fashion to achieve concrete results for the well being of our people throughout the world.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of El Salvador for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Elías Antonio Saca González, President of the Republic of El Salvador, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Eduardo Rodríguez Veltzé, President of the Republic of Bolivia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Bolivia.

Mr. Eduardo Rodríguez Veltzé, President of the Republic of Bolivia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Eduardo Rodríguez Veltzé, President of the Republic of Bolivia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Rodríguez Veltzé (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, I am pleased to greet and congratulate you on your election, which will assure the success of these debates. I am also pleased to greet Secretary-General Kofi Annan, whose efforts to preserve peace and promote solidarity among the world's peoples are recognized and appreciated.

My country, Bolivia, located at the heart of South America, has just overcome, with sacrifice and deprivation, a profound political crisis. The maturity and the democratic spirit of my people led to a transition period to ensure institutional continuity and to initiate a process to legitimize, through a universal vote, the election of the country's authorities. Furthermore, this process had as its goal to establish governability and to reaffirm faith in the citizens' right to elect their Government and the parliamentary representatives of their choice.

During the electoral process that Bolivia is presently undergoing, a new design for a pioneer nation in securing its liberty and independence will be defined. The elections to take place at the end of this year will bring about a new and unprecedented political scenario, a process to carry out a constituent assembly and the people's decision to put into practice regional autonomies that will lead to the establishment of a new social contract oriented towards the construction of a more organized country, forever democratic, without exclusion, as required by the Millennium Development Goals.

A well-known Colombian citizen advised us that only with a new look to the past may we create the possibility of another future; and only by looking creatively at our world may we catch a glimpse of the new type of order we ought to build. This vision is

shared by the peoples of Latin America and, of course, by Bolivians. For some time, we have been united in our effort to solve disputes by encouraging common actions so that disputing countries may look for and negotiate peaceful solutions to their differences.

It is also true that in this America with profound democratic roots and ties of brotherhood and solidarity among the peoples, there are still unresolved situations, such as Bolivia's landlocked status. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the people of Bolivia and neighbouring countries should be capable of creating spaces in which open dialogue can take place, without prejudice, thereby allowing for solutions that look to the future and are not based on positions anchored in the past. We believe that it is essential to enter into negotiations with a view to consulting, responding to and serving mutual interests and reaching a definitive solution that restores Bolivia's sovereign access to the Pacific coast. It is essential that we create an environment of trust for negotiation and agreement for that purpose.

Latin America is a region in which we dream about freedom, hope for progress and the integration of our peoples, although this requires constant renewal and creativity on our part. I am convinced that we will continue with the necessary task of attaining the Millennium Development Goals set for 2015 and the subsequent indicators for measuring social progress, although in the case of Bolivia we may face difficulties that will require us to focus on inequality and exclusion, violent conflict, intolerance, unfair land distribution, unemployment, extreme poverty and malnutrition.

The Bolivian people fully agree that we need to lay a foundation for ensuring progress with equity. Thus, a global effort is required if we are to eradicate poverty.

Although significant progress has been made with regard to such indicators for sustainability, institutional improvements and economic stability, the Government of Bolivia is concerned about the deadlines that have been set, and urges the international community to consider putting in place better terms and conditions.

Harmony among peoples cannot be achieved fully in a world in which security is put to the test every day by terrorist threats against innocent people and against the systems chosen by peoples who cherish the conviction that the only way of safeguarding mutual respect and harmony in society is through the exercise of democracy. Bolivia condemns terrorism and is actively combating that scourge afflicting humankind.

Our Organization, which is committed to promoting the civilized coexistence of the peoples of the world, is 60 years old. Founded by 45 States, it now has 191 Members, which support and put into practice the guiding principles of our global community. A world without the United Nations is unthinkable in either theory or practice, for it is guiding us towards a common destiny and away from such current tribulations as poverty, terrorism and violence.

Bolivia recognizes that, throughout the 60 years of this Organization's life, it has benefited from valuable cooperation efforts. Indeed, certain problems are shared by many countries. Thus international cooperation cannot be considered merely an act of solidarity. Cooperation must be a pillar of peace, since one of the threats that we are facing is increasing inequality leading to the marginalization of vast sectors of our societies. This brings dissatisfaction, which frequently gives rise to dangerous social tensions.

It is not merely a question of achieving apparent economic stability. Rather, we must significantly improve quality of life indices, both out of basic respect for human rights and because of the need for equity and justice.

Bolivia reaffirms its commitment to the principles of the United Nations, to peace and to democratic institutions. We believe that the United Nations is the highest forum for universal interaction among countries and individuals, and we also believe that its institutions and entities must be adapted and reformed if it is to achieve its objectives.

The interrelationship between development, security and human rights within a framework of democratic values is an expression of today's interdependent world, and of multilateralism, which reaffirms the leading role of the United Nations and our ongoing determination to promote social progress and to improve living standards within a broader concept of freedom. In this context, Bolivia believes that the recent commitment made at the world summit to adopt, in the near future, a United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples will encourage social integration and peaceful national coexistence.

Bolivia is sincere in its determination to achieve peace, solidarity and the well-being of all, to protect the rule of law and to secure justice and liberty. Ultimately, we are guided by democracy — a system that can be improved upon, and a way of life.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Bolivia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Eduardo Rodriguez Veltzé, President of the Republic of Bolivia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Item 9 of the provisional agenda (*continued*)

General debate

Address by The Honourable Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa.

The Honourable Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency The Honourable Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Malielegaoi (Samoa): Samoa warmly congratulates you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at this historic moment — a very challenging time. Samoa pledges to you and to Sweden its full support and cooperation throughout the sixtieth session of the General Assembly.

I also want to pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping of the Gabonese Republic, for his outstanding service and effective guidance during the fifty-ninth session.

Just a few days ago in this very Hall, we met to take stock of progress and map the way forward in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs are not merely a set of targets, but encompass a process which addresses the varied challenges to human development. While some progress has been made over the past five years, much more remains to be done.

It is therefore imperative that concerted global efforts be strengthened, in terms of political commitment and resource mobilization, if the outcome of the summit envisaged in the summit outcome document is to be achieved.

Samoa is progressing well towards achieving the MDGs by the target period of 2015. Challenges remain, however, and they are being addressed through legislative and policy initiatives and the creation of innovative partnerships with the donor community and civil society.

Samoa reiterates its support for the ongoing efforts to modernize and strengthen the United Nations. We thank the previous President of the Assembly, as well as the Secretary-General, for their laudable work and tireless efforts in advancing the reform and revitalization of the Organization.

It is our belief that reform measures must provide for a transparent, democratic and expanded Security Council, in both the permanent and non-permanent membership categories, and for an effective and strengthened Organization that reflects the realities of the twenty-first century. Substantive changes are therefore required with regard to both the General Assembly and the Security Council, as well as to other bodies of the United Nations system.

We congratulate President Ping, in particular for his stewardship and leadership throughout the negotiations for and the adoption of the summit declaration last week. This is the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations; the time is surely ripe now to implement the reforms needed to revitalize our Organization and enable it to effectively realize the principles and goals identified in the declaration.

The courageous efforts of the Israeli and Palestinian authorities to find a sustainable peace solution deserve our applause and prayers for continuing success. While there have been positive developments in the Middle East, the violence and acts

of terrorism in Iraq and in other parts of the region remain causes for grave concern.

Terrorism, perpetrated by those with no respect for human decency and life, continues to plague our world. No cause or grievances can justify acts that kill and maim innocent people. Heinous and murderous acts of terrorism serve only the purposes of those who want to destabilize society and usher in a dark age for our world. Samoa therefore condemns terrorism in all its forms in the strongest terms and will continue to support the international campaign to overcome that scourge to human dignity and security.

The peacekeeping and security advocacy work of the United Nations around the world has our full support. Samoa presently has police contingents serving with peacekeeping missions in Timor-Leste and in Liberia. Within our Pacific region, Samoa also contributes police support to the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) under the auspices of the Pacific Islands Forum. RAMSI conforms to its regional responsibilities under Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter and recognizes the sovereignty of the Solomon Islands.

Samoa is pleased to note that the membership of the International Criminal Court will soon number 100. Samoa adds its voice to the appeal for the early ratification of and accession to the Rome Statute establishing the Court by those States that have not yet done so. The Court brings to justice those who commit genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes and is therefore an important institution in upholding international humanitarian standards and the protection of human rights. For those reasons, it would be a mistake to undermine the effectiveness of the Court in any way. Instead, the Court should be given the necessary support to give it universality.

Samoa remains extremely concerned about the proliferation of nuclear weapons and their threat, not just to international peace and security, but to the very existence of life on our planet. We regret deeply that the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, held in May 2005, was unable to agree on steps to strengthen the non-proliferation regime. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) are the main instruments for controlling the spread of nuclear weapons.

The South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty highlights the seriousness with which the issue of the threat of nuclear weapons is viewed in our region and we call on States who have not done so to ratify the Treaty's Protocols. Clearly, adherence to the requirements of the NPT, the CTBT and other conventions on disarmament is vital. Samoa therefore joins the call for all United Nations Members to sign on to those treaties and for States parties to honour their obligations to them.

Small arms and light weapons have been used time and again in violent conflict, contributing to the destabilization and devastation of communities in many countries, including in the Pacific. The proliferation of small weapons is a major problem. We therefore fully support the holding of a review conference on small arms next year, in particular with a view to concluding a treaty to control the trade in small arms and stop them from reaching areas of violent conflict.

As the current Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum, I wish to report that since the General Assembly session last year new and positive developments have taken place in the Pacific region. The programme of Pacific Regional Assistance to Nauru, a regional response to assist Nauru rebuild its economy, is in progress. With assistance from the United Nations, an autonomous government is now being established in Bougainville. I am also pleased to announce that the Pacific Plan — a road map to further strengthen regional cooperation and integration to achieve our region's priority goals of economic growth, sustainable development, good governance and security — is nearing completion and is expected to be considered and approved by Pacific Forum leaders at their next summit, in Papua New Guinea, in October of this year. The Pacific Plan will also improve Pacific countries' capacities to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

The Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, adopted in January 2005, sets out long-term action plans for the sustainable development of small island developing States (SIDS). While we accept that the primary responsibility for the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy lies with us, there is still a critical need for the sustained and long-term commitment of our partners to focus on the special

case of SIDS and to take their specific vulnerabilities, and the challenges generated thereby, into account. We therefore call on the United Nations system and the international community to provide the necessary support to implement and monitor the Mauritius Strategy.

As has often been repeated from this rostrum, trade is the surest path to greater wealth and a vital component of sustainable development for SIDS. We therefore support the successful conclusion of the Doha Round, which took the vulnerabilities of small States fully into account in the negotiations, particularly with regard to special and preferential treatment for small economies.

Let me conclude by reaffirming Samoa's commitment to multilateralism and to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Finance of the Independent State of Samoa for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Finance of the Independent State of Samoa, was escorted from the rostrum.

Agenda Item 9 of the provisional agenda (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Gianfranco Fini, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy.

Mr. Fini (Italy) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to express my heartfelt congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. Your vast experience in the international arena is the best guarantee of success for your mandate. My sincere thanks go also to your predecessor, Jean Ping, who presided over the fifty-ninth session with particular effectiveness and skill.

The deliberations of the High-level Plenary Meeting represent an important and significant step in the process of adapting the United Nations to the global challenges that it must address. The results achieved in the process of reforming the United Nations, its basic principles and its bodies reflect the broadest consensus that could be mustered within the international community. Any attempt to reach for more would in all probability have meant jeopardizing its unity, which is an absolute and essential value. We should therefore rate those results highly and consider them to be a call to action.

Indeed, the heads of State or Government have shown us the path to follow. It is now up to the General Assembly and the Secretariat to set about implementing the initiatives agreed upon in the outcome document, improving and developing them where necessary.

Recent events remind us, sometimes tragically, of the need for a multilateral system that has a solid structure and can respond swiftly and effectively to the many challenges that individual members of the international community would never be able to address by themselves. Italy is convinced of this, and commitment to multilateralism is a basic characteristic of our foreign policy.

Of course, Italian support for the action of international organizations is not based solely on abstract ideals. We support the principle, and especially the practice, of multilateralism because we are convinced that common principles and, above all, common interests justify the sharing of resources, tools, responsibilities and benefits. Joint action is inconceivable without a shared perception of interests, objectives and their priorities.

Among the positive results of the High-level Plenary Meeting is that it encouraged consensus on an innovative and comprehensive vision of collective security and highlighted the main phenomena threatening that security. Terrorism, underdevelopment and fundamentalism are the primary threats, and our response must be equal to the challenge; it can come only from a strong and credible multilateral system.

In the light of the emergence of fundamentalist terrorism, the use of force by itself, although sometimes inevitable, is not enough. It is not through weapons, but through political means, that we can create the conditions for a fruitful dialogue among cultures, civilizations and religions and thereby develop the social and international solidarity that can prevent terrorism from continuing its criminal proselytizing.

Global solidarity is also the most appropriate response to the scandal of global poverty, which results from the persistence of profound inequities in the distribution of wealth — inequities that violate not only every standard of fairness, but also the most fundamental criteria of logic and effectiveness. To eradicate underdevelopment, we must promote a tangible solidarity that provides real and lasting benefits by combining political and economic action on the part of donor countries with the heightened sense of responsibility and autonomy that is developing in emerging countries as they yearn to shake off the culture of dependency.

Underdevelopment and terrorism often find unifying elements — which increases the potential for instability — in fundamentalism and ideological fanaticism, sworn enemies of universal values such as freedom, peace and equality: values seen as a grave threat by those who seek to control and delegitimize our social systems.

We firmly believe that the international community must unite in the fight against terrorism, underdevelopment and fundamentalism. This session of the General Assembly will have the task of identifying concrete initiatives and actions to that end.

Italy's steadfast commitment — even at the cost of significant sacrifices — to promoting peace in key areas of crisis such as the Middle East, the Balkans and Darfur; our assistance to countries, such as Afghanistan and Iraq, that are seeking to recover after decades of obscurantist oppression; our commitment to spreading a culture of freedom and dialogue among cultures; and our front-line commitment to fighting the scourge of underdevelopment, including through innovative methods such as debt cancellation and participation in the Global Fund against the major epidemics, are eloquent and material testimony to the seriousness of our intentions. In that regard, I wish to mention in particular our activities to promote the development of the African continent — activities carried out not only by way of anti-poverty initiatives, but also by strengthening African capacities in the areas of conflict prevention, management and settlement.

We are prepared to meet the challenges before us, which will entail the significant contribution of material and human resources that Italy is providing for the functioning of the United Nations. It would not be consistent with Italy's attachment to multilateralism if I did not add that our efforts would be bound to fail if they were carried out individually and not within a multilateral framework — hence our resolve to strengthen multilateralism.

The reform proposals introduced over the past year and submitted for the consideration of heads of State or Government provide us with new and potentially valuable tools that we must put to good use. I am thinking, for example, of the possibility of significantly developing the international community's capacity to prevent crisis situations, manage conflicts and modernize the modalities and contents of traditional development assistance programmes in order to promote lasting stability.

That is why Italy cannot but favour the prospect of developing or inventing tools for communal action in those areas by creating new bodies such as the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council. Their creation will make it possible to operationalize the desired integrated approach to crisis management and management of peacekeeping operations — an approach that promises to reduce the recurrence of conflicts, consolidate peace processes in crisis regions and promote the restoration of rule-of-law infrastructures.

The reform process under way can and must invest in United Nations institutions in their entirety, with regard to both their composition and working methods, in order to strengthen effectiveness, while at the same time ensuring the coherence and balance of the Organization's general framework. Italy is fully aware and convinced of this. We are also convinced of the need — especially in this area — to proceed with due attention to individual sensitivities, within the framework of a process that ensures transparency and inclusiveness.

At the summit, it was not possible to reach an agreement on the rather controversial subject of Security Council reform, whose various aspects, already widely debated in the preparatory phase, are well known. Also well known is the position of Italy and of countries that, like us, belong to the "Uniting for consensus" group. We presented a proposal aimed at greater inclusion, greater effectiveness and increased democratic participation, having broad geographic and regional representation and elaborated in a constructive and flexible spirit.

We are well aware that the priorities of other countries are different, and we obviously respect their positions, although we do not share them. It is our fervent hope that everyone will be convinced that Security Council reform cannot be the result of shows of force, unacceptable conditions or artificial accelerations aimed at creating new positions of privilege. Awareness of the need to reform the Council is the common heritage of all Members. Such reform certainly cannot be considered the exclusive prerogative of those who advocate one reform option as opposed to another. Recent events have demonstrated that none of the proposals currently on the table has the votes needed for adoption. Undoubtedly, none of them enjoys the broad consensus essential to ensure that the future shape of the Security Council will help unite, and not divide, the international community. This is why we firmly believe that it is necessary to turn the page in order to unite efforts to seek new consensus formulas, both in terms of substance and in terms of method.

It is clear that this quest cannot go on forever. Travelling this road together with trust and perseverance is the only way to ensure effective and lasting outcomes. Italy is prepared to consider, in a constructive spirit, any potential solution that will garner the broadest consensus possible, but will continue to oppose — in accordance with the principles shared by a growing number of Member States — any formulas that could create new divisions and marginalization. Given the challenges it must face, the international community needs to be united in its intentions.

I know quite well that in these statements, the adjective "historic" is used so often that it loses much of its meaning. Nevertheless, when we think about the timetables and the risks or opportunities that are emerging, describing the moment of this General Assembly as historic does not seem an exaggeration. A well-known aphorism reminds us that those who do not remember history are condemned to repeat it. History teaches us that a united international community based on the recognition of shared principles and basic interests is the necessary condition for ensuring peace, development and progress for our peoples.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr Sergei Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): In no way can today's discussion be called routine. We are faced with summing up the preliminary results of the large-scale United Nations reforms that have been launched and designating the main thrust for the work of the entire system of United Nations institutions in implementing the outcome document of the 2005 world summit. We propose to structure the work of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly in such a manner as to facilitate the broadest possible agreement on a number of conceptual issues related to strengthening the United Nations that will, to a large degree, determine our ability to enhance the manageability of international trends in an era of globalization, and better respond to its new accompanying threats and challenges.

An analysis of the experience of the United Nations over the sixty years of its existence, with all the vagaries of the post-war, cold war and post-cold war world order, gives us much food for thought and many conclusions. I would like to share some of that with you from the viewpoint of the Russian Federation.

As the most representative international institution with a universal mandate, the United Nations has been and remains a major integration factor in global politics. The success of the United Nations is our success and its failures are our failures. But ultimately the balance of its work is, we believe, definitely positive. It is primarily due to this Organization that we have managed to avoid a new threat of world war and a nuclear disaster and have been able to prevent and settle dozens of military conflicts. At present, the United Nations mechanisms continue to be a means of constructive cooperation touching upon all spheres of human activity.

The greater interdependence of the modern world has not made it more secure. The standoff between East and West has been replaced by numerous crises and conflicts that until recently had remained latent, left on the periphery of the interests of the two super-Powers. Some of those conflicts are becoming real or potential sources of international terrorism, feeding transborder crime and drug trafficking, which are closely related to it. Humanity faces the threat of the uncontrolled spread of weapons of mass destruction and the possibility of their falling into the hands of terrorists. Again the world is witnessing genocide and humanitarian disasters. All of this presents immediate danger to each and every one of us.

In that context, the enormous potential of the United Nations is in greater demand, primarily in ensuring peace and security on a collective and, more importantly, on a legitimate legal basis. The Organization has at its disposal an entire arsenal of resources enabling it to coordinate the actions of the international community, to combine political efforts with those in the social, economic and humanitarian areas, as well as in the field of protection of human rights and the environment and other spheres. We should develop these assets through the concerted efforts of all States. Russia considers this task to be a strategic core element of its foreign policy.

The events of the first years of the new millennium reaffirm the validity of the conclusions drawn by the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change and the Secretary-General, that is, that a stronger United Nations and a better use of its multilateral advantages are an essential instrument to build a balanced, safe international system, based on respect for the unique features of every country, their sovereign equality and collective responsibility. There is no reasonable alternative to this.

Multilateral mechanisms should also play a key role in resolving the issues of disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, based on strict compliance with the relevant international agreements. United Nations achievements include Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), initiated by Russia, and the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, which establishes the legal basis for preventing weapons of mass destruction from falling into the hands of terrorists.

It is now crucial to prevent an arms race in outer space. I remind the Assembly that Russia has assumed the obligation not to be the first to launch any type of new weapon into space and has called upon other countries possessing space capabilities to join in this measure to keep outer space peaceful. It is time to take steps to enhance transparency and build confidence in this area.

The legal basis for countering new threats, primarily terrorism, is being reinforced. The adoption at the recent Security Council summit of resolution 1624 (2005), initiated by the United Kingdom, is a new, important step forward. It places outside the law not only the terrorists, their accomplices and those who finance them, but also the individuals inciting terrorist acts. This Security Council decision should put an end to attempts to engage the mass media to propagandize and justify terrorism.

We anticipate that the General Assembly will also contribute to the fight against terrorism and will promote completion of the negotiations on a comprehensive convention on international terrorism as soon as possible. The fight against terrorism must be continued most decisively. Each of us should critically assess his or her efforts in this area.

The realities are that while the sanctions against the Taliban, Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities are still in force, the supplying of arms and material and other kinds of assistance to the fighters continues. The geographical scope of their activities is expanding. For many countries, including Russia, this is tangible on their own soil. Extremists who are not directly linked to Al-Qaida are also stepping up their activities in various parts of the world. This requires strengthening of cooperation between States and the 1267 sanctions Committee, the 1540 Committee and, of course, the Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee. Furthermore, we believe that the compilation of a consolidated list of all terrorists and terrorist organizations, whether they are associated in any way with Al-Qaida or not, cannot be postponed.

The development of criteria for the use of force in accordance with the United Nations Charter is another pressing issue. Such criteria, when agreed upon, could be useful if they become a kind of benchmark for consideration by the Security Council of various crisis situations. At the same time, it is clear that these criteria cannot be applied automatically. The Security Council would authorize the use of force on a case-by-case basis as called for in the Charter.

Another equally important topic is that of States, in exercising their Charter right to individual and collective self-defense, to include self-defense in case of an external terrorist attack or the imminent threat of such attack. Russia, like other States that have become targets of terrorist attacks originating beyond their borders, has no right to err in the eyes of its citizens, who have entrusted their security to us. We anticipate that those critical issues will be given due attention at this session of the General Assembly.

Above all, force should not be used to oppose law. It can be an effective tool to ensure the rule of law

in crisis situations. It is a tool to be used in extraordinary cases in which vital, legally protected values and interests of the entire international community, or certain of its members, are in jeopardy.

Unfortunately, in the preparations for the 2005 world summit, insufficient attention was given to seeking solutions to those and other important issues and to finding a way to common understanding. Thus, that task must remain a top priority of our agenda.

Much remains to be done in terms of development and the eradication of poverty, epidemics, famine and illiteracy. Such action would be the strongest way to ensure global stability and eliminate the breeding grounds of extremism of all kinds. Russia endorses all initiatives aimed at attaining the Millennium Goals and will enhance its contribution to resolving those urgent issues. The success of our concerted efforts to support development greatly depends on the efficacy of the Peacebuilding Commission to be established. The Commission will achieve the required results if it is more than just another debating society and if it can be a mechanism facilitating the greater coordination of the programmes and the projects of all the participants in development assistance, including the World Bank Group, the International Monetary Fund, regional development banks, other multilateral and bilateral donors and, of course, recipient countries.

The dramatic events of the last six months have revealed the sensitivity of the issue of Security Council reform for the majority of Member States. Guided above all by its interest in ensuring the Security Council's effectiveness, Russia continues to support possible modifications of that key organ on the basis of well-conceived and mutually acceptable decisions. United Nations Members have made the wise decision to continue negotiations, rather than pushing for a vote that might split the Organization.

I recall the striking words: the United Nations was created not to make heaven on Earth but to save the Earth from hell. Indeed, the United Nations is not an ideal body, but the best that humanity was able to create on the ashes of two world wars. With the help of the United Nations, we are able to effectively counter threats to peace and security in the context of evolving geopolitical realities.

Today, mankind is facing the challenges of globalization. It is not a question of whether we should accept those challenges or not, but of how we should respond to them, and on the basis of what principles. The 2005 world summit decisions outline the general direction for our efforts. As a permanent member of the Security Council and the next President of the Group of Eight, Russia, together with other States, will continue to strive to strengthen the collective underpinnings of global politics and to enhance mechanisms for multilateral cooperation.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Ban (Republic of Korea): Let me begin, Sir, by extending my sincere congratulations to you on assuming the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. Well aware of your experience and diplomatic skills, I have every confidence that under your able leadership, we will achieve great results during this important session, which marks the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations. I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping, whose tireless work enabled the membership to successfully prepare for the High-level Plenary Meeting held last week. My highest tribute also goes to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, for his unqualified dedication to our world body.

The leaders of the world gathered here last week in the largest summit meeting of States in history and demonstrated their collective political will to overcome the challenges of the present and to build a future of peace and prosperity for all humankind. They reaffirmed their commitment to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. They also underscored the vital role of the United Nations for our time and gave guidance on steps to reform the Organization. The outcome document (resolution 60/1), adopted in the greatest spirit of cooperation and compromise, may not be everything to everyone, but it is the guideline for action that our leaders have given us. The task now is to implement it.

The work will require determined action by all. Success will be ensured only when each and every one of us strives to look beyond the immediate horizon. We must commit ourselves anew to realizing the ideal that inspired the founders of the Organization 60 years ago, that of building a peaceful and prosperous world in

which all peoples live together in harmony, free from want and fear.

Certainly, with 30,000 children dying of hunger or preventable diseases every day, the world lies far from that ideal today. Everyone agrees that we have the means to lift the whole world out of poverty and underdevelopment. We just need to effectively put those means to good use. Thus, the concrete, action-oriented recommendations adopted by our leaders on partnership, financing, trade, debt relief and other aspects of development are greatly welcome. We must fully and speedily implement them so that, by the year 2015, most of the world's impoverished are freed from hunger and poverty, the spread of HIV/AIDS is halted, primary education is made universal for all children, gender equality takes firm root in all societies and the global partnership to achieve those and other development goals is in full operation.

In particular, we welcome the timetables many developed countries have presented for reaching the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income for official development assistance (ODA) by 2015. The Republic of Korea is committed to doing its share. Despite the internal and external economic challenges that my country has faced since the financial crisis of 1997, we have continued to increase development assistance year after year, doubling our ODA between 2000 and 2004. We now plan to double it again by 2009.

My Government is also seeking other ways to build partnerships with developing countries. Utilizing our resources and expertise in information and communication technology, we are working with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific to build and host an Asia-Pacific training centre for information and communication technology, with an initial outlay of $10 million. The centre will contribute to reducing the digital divide and enabling developing countries to make the most of information and communication technologies for development.

Korea is also dedicated to good governance, which is an essential ingredient of development. Thus, we are working with the Secretariat to establish a United Nations governance centre in Seoul, as a follow-up to the Sixth Global Forum on Reinventing Government, which my Government hosted earlier this year.

Health is another area that requires our collective action. In our globalized, connected world, infectious diseases can spread with terrifying speed, with no regard for borders. They can become pandemics that threaten the development and the security of affected countries and regions. Here, too, the world must act together. For its part, my Government is contributing to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

We are also vigorously supporting the activities of the International Vaccine Institute in Seoul, which strives to develop and disseminate vaccines most needed in the world's poorest regions. And we have taken part in the launching of the International Partnership on Avian and Pandemic Influenza, announced by President Bush of the United States in his speech here last week (see A/60/PV.2).

As world leaders noted, the threats to peace and security around the world today are increasing, interconnected and global in scale. They require of us an urgent, collective and more determined response. Terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and transnational crime are grave threats that can be most effectively addressed when countries act in concert under the United Nations banner.

Cruel and inhuman acts of terrorism targeting innocent lives, as witnessed in Iraq, the United Kingdom and elsewhere, are heinous crimes for which there can be no justification. The Republic of Korea is already a party to all 12 international anti-terrorism conventions in force. Last week, I signed for my Government the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism as soon as it was opened for signature. We are strongly committed to preventing and eradicating international terrorism in all its forms. We will continue to actively participate in the efforts to conclude a comprehensive convention on international terrorism as soon as possible.

The proliferation of WMDs is another pressing security concern. The prospect of WMDs falling into the hands of terrorists is more alarming and real than ever before. The Republic of Korea is fully committed to the non-proliferation of WMDs. Thus, we are dismayed that the outcome document of the High-level Plenary Meeting is silent on this vital issue. We very much hope for an early opportunity to redress this omission. In the meantime, my Government will

continue to press for the strengthening of the nuclear compliance and verification system. We call for the universal adoption of International Atomic Energy Association (IAEA) additional protocols, the disarmament and non-proliferation of biological and chemical weapons and the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004).

In facing the threats of terrorism or WMDs, or any traditional threats, the Security Council must be made to act more quickly and efficiently to situations that arise when the elements of a threat become reality. At the same time, the Security Council must exercise with only the utmost prudence its prerogative to sanction the use of force. In that regard, we should build upon the agreement reflected in the outcome document on the establishment of principles for the use of force. That would lead to the strengthened relevance and efficiency of the Security Council and of the collective security system embodied in the United Nations as a whole.

Peacekeeping has been an important part of this system. Indeed, the success of the peacekeeping missions in such places as Timor-Leste has been one of the proudest achievements of the Organization in recent years. However, there have been failures, as well as cases of fragile peace being overtaken by the resumption of conflict. Shameful misconduct by some peacekeeping operation personnel in certain missions has added to the sense of disappointment. Obviously, what is needed is a more structured and extensive mechanism to make the peace more durable and consolidate the grounds for post-conflict reconstruction. In this regard, my Government welcomes the decision taken at the High-level Plenary Meeting to establish a Peacebuilding Commission.

We hope to play our part, so that effective peacebuilding can become an important part of the role of the United Nations to ensure peace and security around the world. This is very much in line with our past and current participation in efforts to restore peace in many challenged areas of the world, including in Iraq, where we are helping the Iraqi people to build a democratic and prosperous country.

I would like to take this opportunity to address the current situation regarding the North Korean nuclear issue. After a 13-month hiatus, the fourth round of the six-party talks commenced on 26 July, broke off for a recess and resumed last week. During the talks, all participants agreed on the goal and principles of the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. They conducted serious, in-depth consultations to make substantive progress towards realizing that objective. For our part, the Republic of Korea has made an earnest effort to expedite the talks and move them towards a resolution, including through the offer to supply 2 million kilowatts of electric power to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea directly, addressing one of the most pressing problems it faces.

As we are gathered here, the resumed fourth round is under way to adopt an agreement on the principles for the resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue. Once adopted, the agreement will be a crucial step towards the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and will launch discussions on an action plan towards a peaceful resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue.

A strategic decision by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to dismantle all nuclear weapons and nuclear programmes would be met with economic and energy assistance and security assurances. North Korea must return to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and comply with the full scope of IAEA safeguards so as to restore the trust of the international community. The doors would then open to its right to peaceful use of nuclear energy. We urge North Korea to take this road.

The Republic of Korea is committed to promoting human rights as universal values that should be guaranteed to all. Based on our own experience of the past decades, we know that development and security are on shaky ground without full respect for the human rights of all. We thus welcome the reform initiatives to strengthen the United Nations human rights system and wholly support the creation of a Human Rights Council. We would have preferred to see stronger language and greater detail about the composition, mandate and functions of the Council spelled out in the summit outcome document. Working closely with other delegations, we hope to promptly engage in active consultations so that the Council can be established and can start functioning as soon as possible.

The Republic of Korea is also committed to democracy at home and abroad. We are an active participant in the Community of Democracies and have supported the International Conference of New and Restored Democracies. We have pledged to contribute

to the United Nations Democracy Fund, and we will remain a strong supporter of the continuing mission of the United Nations to nurture and strengthen democracy and human rights around the world.

Respect for human rights and the rule of law are indispensable for the preservation of peace and cooperation among nations. Mass killings, genocide and other grave infringements of human rights are threats to peace and stability and must not be let pass with impunity. The principle of the "responsibility to protect", as discussed during the High-level Plenary Meeting, underscores the responsibility of the international community to lend assistance to States in upholding their solemn obligation to protect their citizens. We support the continued deliberations by Member States to reach agreement on the responsibility to protect. This would certainly form the backbone of a preventive mechanism against gross violations of human rights.

Earlier this month, Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans and the surrounding areas in the United States, causing massive casualties and tremendous pain and suffering for the victims and their families. On behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Korea, I would like to extend our deepest sympathies and condolences to those affected.

Coming less than a year after the massive tsunami that struck many countries of South-East Asia, Katrina once again mobilized the international community in bringing emergency relief to the victims. It also underscored the urgency of establishing effective mechanisms to cope with natural disasters around the world, including the importance of early warning systems. With those lessons in mind, natural disasters will be a primary issue for debate at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit meeting, which my country is hosting in Busan in November. Meanwhile, we reaffirm our support for the reform of United Nations humanitarian aid agencies to enhance their efficiency and effectiveness in helping countries to recover from disaster and rebuild their capacities for sustainable development.

We mark the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations with mixed feelings. On the one hand, there is much hope. It is the hope of the entire international community for the United Nations to prevail over the new challenges of the twenty-first century and to assume a more central role in strengthening peace and security, promoting prosperity and spreading democracy and human rights around the world. On the other hand, there is widespread disappointment. It has become painfully clear that the United Nations as it stands today is unfit to carry out the demands of these complex times. Between the hope and the disappointment, there is much uncertainty. But of one thing I am certain: all of us gathered here are united in the conviction that the hope must triumph over the disappointment; that we must rise to the occasion and make the United Nations fit for the twenty-first century.

Indeed, our global body must be strengthened with far-reaching reforms that are in step with the dynamic challenges of a borderless and fluid world. Those reforms should be comprehensive — encompassing all the elements of the system — and realized in such a way as to give all Members, large and small, a sense of ownership in the process and the outcome. Faithful to the guidance provided in the outcome document of the High-level Plenary Meeting, and in synergistic cooperation with one another, all stakeholders — Member States, the Secretariat, the funds and programmes, specialized agencies and other constituents of the United Nations system — must seize this opportunity for renewal and revitalization. Indeed, we must engage in a genuine exercise in multilateralism to strengthen our global body.

Reform of the Security Council must be pursued to enhance its accountability, transparency and efficiency. My delegation believes that increasing the number of non-permanent seats on the Council, with no addition of permanent seats, is the best way to foster broad-based consensus on this vital issue.

The Secretariat has long served the collective will and interests of the Member States of the United Nations. The contributions of those who have served in the United Nations system with dedication and professionalism should be highly praised. However, the credibility and integrity of the system have been damaged by recent revelations of mismanagement and corruption. The maladministration of the oil-for-food programme, as Mr. Volcker stated in delivering his fourth report to the Security Council, should not be seen as a lone case but as symptomatic of deep-seated systemic issues of an Organization designed for simpler times. Reform, as he further stated, is urgent. Without bold reforms to restore the trust and support of the global community, enhance efficacy and improve

the morale of staff, the system will not be able to live up to the growing expectations of the twenty-first century.

Underscoring the vital importance of this issue, the High-level Plenary Meeting has fully endorsed the management reform initiatives taken by the Secretary-General. With the active support and encouragement of Member States, those initiatives should quickly bear fruit, providing strengthened accountability and oversight, higher performance and ethical standards for staff, and greater authority and responsibility for the Secretary-General as the chief administrative officer of the Organization.

The challenges facing the United Nations today are daunting. Some may find them insurmountable. But we are a country that was born and developed alongside the United Nations over the past 60 years, receiving particularly active assistance from it in earlier decades. We have full confidence in the future of the Organization. Now a maturing democracy that upholds human rights, an emerging donor that seeks to do its share in helping others, and a staunch advocate of peace and effective multilateralism, the Republic of Korea is fully committed to bringing greater vitality and reliability to the United Nations.

At the High-level Plenary the leaders of the world gave us guiding words for making the United Nations a more effective and relevant instrument for realizing the aspirations of the global community in the twenty-first century. We must not let those words remain just words. Let us proceed with vigour and dedication to put them into action.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on Mr. Philippe Douste-Blazy, Minister for Foreign Affairs of France.

Mr. Douste-Blazy (France) (*spoke in French*): Speaking for the first time from this rostrum, I wish to reaffirm here the importance France attaches to the multilateral system. Our common future cannot be envisaged without strengthening it.

The declaration adopted the day before yesterday is a milestone in that direction, even if it does not meet all our expectations. Indeed, the text makes some significant advances. I am thinking in particular of innovative financing for development. I am also thinking of the decision to establish a peacebuilding commission within the Security Council. Finally, I am thinking of the establishment of a Human Rights Council and the endorsement of the principle of the responsibility to protect. Now it is up to us to put those new concepts into practice.

In that connection, I wish to pay tribute here to the remarkable work that has been done under the stewardship of Mr. Jean Ping.

But let us not underestimate the extent of the task that still remains to be accomplished, be it in the areas of counter-terrorism, non-proliferation, Security Council reform or development assistance.

The United Nations is founded on the rule of law and the promotion of universal standards. Those reflect our common values and our conviction that there can be no security and development without scrupulous respect for human rights. This is not a moral question but one of respect for the identity of every individual. It is not a matter of passing judgement but of enabling all people to live in greater freedom and in dignity.

Let us reject the impressment of children in armed conflicts, the systematic use of sexual violence against women and girls as a weapon of war, the recourse to threats, arbitrary detention and torture of opponents, journalists, labour leaders and defenders of human rights. And, let us conclude the negotiations on a convention against forced disappearances. To that end, let us strengthen the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and promptly establish the Human Rights Council.

France particularly welcomes the fact that the international community now has the necessary legitimacy to exercise effectively its responsibility to protect populations threatened by ethnic cleansing, crimes against humanity and genocide. France also welcomes the progress of the international criminal justice system, in particular through the action of the Security Council. Those who believe they can count on the international community not to act when they commit their crimes should make no mistake: they will be held accountable.

Sixty years after the founding of the United Nations, terrorism is now at the top of the list of human rights violations. Nothing — no cause, religion or moral order — can justify attacks on the lives of innocents, the lives of civilians. We must define acts of terrorism once and for all so that we can better combat that barbaric practice which sets humankind back.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction constitutes another major threat for the planet, against which we must remain united and determined.

France, together with its British and German partners, has proposed to Iran a constructive approach paving the way for a new relationship between that great country and the international community. That relationship is currently compromised by concerns over Iran's nuclear programme. We ask Iran to build trust by providing objective guarantees on the exclusively peaceful nature of its programme. Iran's statements from this rostrum compel the international community to meet its responsibilities, as referral of the matter to the Security Council is on the agenda in order to strengthen the authority of the International Atomic Energy Agency. The very integrity of the non-proliferation regime is at stake.

But let us also work to reduce the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, which fuel so many very deadly conflicts.

To better serve peace and ensure the security of populations, the Security Council has expanded its field of action to the trafficking that finances conflicts and the impunity that protects traffickers, using, in particular, sanctions and embargoes. The United Nations is resolutely engaged on the ground, at the very heart of conflicts. More than 70,000 blue helmeted soldiers and police officers are now serving in 18 peacekeeping operations, and thousands of others are operating under Security Council mandates.

The results can be seen, for example, in Timor-Leste, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Liberia and Sierra Leone. But as countries emerge from crisis, it is essential that they continue to benefit from our full attention and support. The United Nations has the duty to take a central role in the transition phase through the Peacebuilding Commission.

Other situations demand great vigilance and a high level of mobilization. Thus, in Haiti, the presence of strong contingents of United Nations soldiers and police must lead to the strengthening of the political process by involving all peaceful forces without exception. Preparations for elections must be accelerated. Like all peoples, the Haitian people, who have suffered for too long, are entitled to respect and freedom.

In Côte d'Ivoire, the presence of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire and the appointment of a High Representative of the Secretary-General for the elections should also help strengthen implementation of the process set out at Marcoussis and Pretoria.

But in Côte d'Ivoire, as in Haiti, the determined action of the united international community will not produce results unless all parties cooperate in good faith and demonstrate their sense of responsibility. In Abidjan as in Bouaké, all must respect their pledged commitments so that free and transparent elections can be held throughout the country. No other solution is possible. That is why it is essential to resolutely support the electoral process that has begun, as well as the demobilization, disarmament and reintegration programmes. All Ivorian parties must understand that they will not block the peace efforts with impunity if they take an obstructive stance, make hate speeches or challenge democratic rules. The Security Council will meet its responsibilities.

The situation in Lebanon demonstrates what can be accomplished by a determined international mobilization, supported by the courageous will of the people. Most Syrian forces have now left Lebanon. Elections have been held. A representative Government has been formed. Our Organization must continue to support the Lebanese Government's efforts to recover full sovereignty and exercise its authority over the whole of its territory. At the same time, we must continue to support the work of the commission of inquiry into the assassination of Rafik Hariri. We are determined to see justice done.

Also with respect to the Middle East, a dynamic of hope, which could touch all States of the region, is emerging following Israel's withdrawal from Gaza. France, together with its European partners, stands with the Palestinians to rebuild and develop that territory so that its inhabitants can move around freely and have access to jobs and, quite simply, to decent living conditions.

But we must not stop there. It is important to restore political prospects for relaunching implementation of the road map by, on the one hand, encouraging the Palestinians to redouble their efforts on security and, on the other, encouraging the Israelis to take the measures necessary to stop settlement activity and to comply with international law in their

struggle for security. Peace can come only with the existence of two peaceful and democratic States living side by side in peace and security.

Finally, with respect to Iraq, France remains engaged so that, with the assistance of the United Nations in particular, the Iraqi people can acquire democratic institutions with which all Iraqis can feel identified. It is clear that a policy focused exclusively on security leads to the retrenchment of a community, thus jeopardizing the cohesion of Iraqi society and the country's unity. In Iraq, too, the political process must not exclude any representative, peaceful force, and the political process must offer Iraq the prospect of the restoration of its complete sovereignty.

In all those crises, the Security Council has gradually imposed the authority of the United Nations in the service of international peace and security. Its action is legitimate, and its authority will be further strengthened when we reach agreement on an enlargement of the Council that reflects the emergence of new Powers and which gives an equitable place to all continents.

At the same time, it is important to carry out the thorough management reforms that our Organization requires. In his report entitled "In larger freedom" (A/59/2005), the Secretary-General proposed elements of an action plan and initiated the first reforms. I pay tribute to his resoluteness and reaffirm France's determination to support him in his approach.

We all know that security and development cannot be separated. Five years after the Millennium Summit, heads of State or Government have just issued a troubling assessment of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

The outcome document they adopted (resolution 60/1) clearly sets out the priorities on which we must take action. The first of those sadly remains food security, because, as underlined by the Declaration on Action Against Hunger and Poverty, adopted in 2004 on the initiative of President Lula and President Chirac, hunger remains the worst weapon of mass destruction. It continues to kill several hundred million men, women and children around the planet. We can see it happening right now in the Sahel and southern Africa. That scourge belonging to another age can and must be fought.

Of course, emergency humanitarian aid must be provided to people in distress. That implies strengthening the coordination of United Nations interventions and, in particular, the establishment of an international humanitarian force, as proposed on several occasions by France.

But beyond that, it is important to provide all areas at risk with the technical resources for prevention and early warning. Above all, it is essential to create the conditions for sustainable development to the benefit of all. That is the aim of the Millennium Development Goals, whose attainment requires substantial long-term financing. Official development assistance will continue to be primary for much time to come. The summit's outcome document recalls the international commitments made in that regard, which France and the European Union will respect. It is urgent that the other developed countries make the same commitments. But we know well that this will not be sufficient. Additional long-term resources have to be found through innovative financing mechanisms.

France endorses the establishment of international solidarity contributions. Over 66 countries have given their support to the pilot project to levy a tax on airline tickets, and we welcome this. In February, France will host a ministerial conference on this initiative so that it can be implemented specifically and promptly.

By devoting three of the eight Goals to health, the Millennium Declaration has put public health back at the centre of sustainable development. In terms of its scope and socio-economic impact, the HIV/AIDS pandemic is of concern to us all. Only by working together will we be able to deal with it, through an approach that integrates prevention, treatment, care and the medical and social vulnerability of infected persons. France wants to carry out this integrated approach with its European partners and with the World Health Organization, the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. We must do everything possible to achieve universal access to treatment by 2010, if need be promoting greater flexibility of intellectual property rights as provided for in the Doha international trade agreements.

The fight against AIDS requires us all to mobilize our efforts. For its part, France has pledged to double its contribution to the Global Fund, increasing the

amount to 300 million euros by 2007. At the same time, international cooperation must take into account the particular challenges faced by certain categories of individuals: victims of abject poverty who are excluded, young women denied the right to sexual and reproductive health, those with disabilities marginalized by society.

From the Indian Ocean to the Gulf of Mexico, from Japan to Antarctica, man is confronted today with an unprecedented rise in environmental threats that he himself has caused. Scientific proof of the reality of climate change and its human origins are irrefutable. All initiatives must be compatible with the Kyoto Protocol; prospects must be charted for the future of the multilateral climate regime after 2012. France would hope to see more robust commitments, especially regarding the transfer of technologies to emerging countries. To respond to the threat and more effectively mobilize energies and resources, France and Europe have proposed the establishment of a specialized agency, based on the United Nations Environment Programme, for the purpose of coordinating international action. This idea is mentioned in the summit's outcome document; it must now be translated into reality.

The United Nations is commemorating its sixtieth anniversary this year. The world has changed profoundly since 1945. Millions of men and women have gained freedom and have emerged from underdevelopment. Technological progress has been staggering and has radically changed the life of society and relations among States. Challenges and threats have changed; they are now worldwide and jeopardize humanity itself.

Yet, we must remain optimistic. It is not too late, given that we understand what is at stake and that we mobilize collectively. The United Nations is rediscovering the way charted for it by the founding fathers: helping in the peaceful settlement of disputes, building international cooperation for development and promoting human rights.

We need the United Nations more than ever; it is the sole framework for universal comprehensive action which is legitimate and recognized as such by all States. Let us give it our full support. France for its part makes this commitment.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Kantathi Suphamongkhon, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Thailand.

Mr. Suphamongkhon (Thailand): On behalf of the delegation of Thailand, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. The General Assembly's task this year is as crucial as the one that Mr. Jean Ping, your predecessor, has just completed. My delegation truly appreciated the strong leadership of Mr. Ping during one of the most challenging periods for the United Nations. My delegation's appreciation also goes to the Secretary-General for his tireless efforts and active role.

Permit me at the outset to express my heartfelt condolences to the American people for the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina. Having suffered from the Asian tsunami ourselves last December, our hearts are truly with the American people. In the aftermath of the tsunami, we were deeply touched by the outpouring of support coming to us from around the world. Our friends were determined to do everything possible to help us get through our darkest days. The Thai people shared this spirit, and we also lent a hand to our neighbours suffering from the same calamity. We are seeing the whole world show the same spirit of shared responsibility coming to the United States in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. We need to move forward with this same spirit, this same sense of shared responsibility, as we tackle the old and new challenges of our modern world of globalization.

There is certainly much to do. In many countries, extreme poverty, hunger, deadly infectious diseases and environmental degradation continue to do damage. They are silent killers. We cannot and must not ignore them. Every day, 50,000 people continue to perish from poverty and hunger; 30,000 children will not survive to celebrate their fifth birthday. Yet, money being spent on arms and weapons continues to outpace money being spent on sustaining lives. This is unacceptable.

Sixty years ago, the desire to achieve unity in diversity with shared responsibility led to the creation of the United Nations. Now at 60, the United Nations is living in a world very different from that of 1945. Today, challenges to human security and economic development can be just as dangerous to the international community as traditional challenges in

the form of military conflicts. The United Nations must be able to act effectively to serve the world's peoples.

The outcome document that was adopted by the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly (resolution 60/1) reflects the shared commitment of world leaders to development, peace and security, as well as human rights and human dignity. It sets the stage for the attainment of peace and prosperity throughout the world.

As difficult as it was to reach a consensus on the outcome document, I believe that it will be even more difficult to translate this consensus into concrete action. The road ahead will not be an easy one to travel. We must stay focused on our common aspirations as we face the difficulties that lie ahead.

Thailand intends to work with the United Nations and with all Member States to ensure that the vision of our leaders and the aspirations of our peoples lead to concrete results. We will actively participate in addressing issues such as the revitalization of the General Assembly, the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council, the reform of the Security Council and the establishment of the Human Rights Council.

We see merit in the idea of collective responsibility to protect people from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. To achieve lasting peace and prosperity, Thailand strongly supports the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission as a mechanism to ensure sustainable post-conflict recovery and development. We also want to see extensive management reform to make the Secretariat more efficient, more effective, and also more accountable.

We must redouble our efforts to break the vicious circle of poverty, disease and conflicts. The challenge of our time is to make peace, prosperity, dignity and freedom common to all. As Chair of the Human Security Network, we are pleased that a human-centred approach to security has been embraced as an integral part of the new collective security consensus.

The eradication of poverty must not be only a dream. We must make it happen. The United Nations must mobilize all relevant agencies and marshal resources to help developing countries progress in a sustainable way. Developing countries must be able to identify and leverage their inner strengths and their comparative advantages. Capacity-building and technical assistance should be readily available. With the right policies and strategies as well as the appropriate infrastructure, developing countries can leapfrog up the development ladder in our modern world by making full use of globalization.

In that connection, we in Thailand have adopted a people-centred development policy which stands side by side with democracy and good governance. At the international level, we are actively pursuing trade and investment liberalization. This is our dual-track policy.

National efforts must be backed by a supportive global environment. That means making international trade free and fair, so that it can be an effective engine for sustainable development. When we talk about free trade, we must be mindful that not everyone is equally fit to compete in the same system of free competition. Two days ago, from this same rostrum, my Prime Minister emphasized that a patient who has just been released from the intensive care unit of a hospital cannot run a race under the same rules and conditions as a fit athlete. That is so true.

Thailand welcomes the reaffirmation of the Monterrey Consensus and other proposals on innovative financing for development. Financial assistance given to developing countries must go towards empowering the recipient countries. We must avoid creating more dependency traps. We must work together on the basis of partnership for sustainable development.

Partnership is also vital in the area of energy. The rapid rise in global oil prices is very harmful to development and has the potential to roll back many of the hard-won gains of developing countries. The higher the price of oil, the longer it will take for many developing countries to realize the Millennium Development Goals. The United Nations should help to mobilize worldwide cooperation to ensure energy security as well as to develop alternative sources of clean energy.

The United Nations must also do more to promote synergy among Member States through the facilitation of partnership building, such as North-South, South-South and trilateral cooperation. We want to see a new and enhanced strategic partnership for development between the United Nations and its Member States.

In South-East Asia, that is the spirit that is transforming the region. For its part, Thailand has been reaching out to forge partnerships for development worldwide. Through regional cooperation for development initiatives, such as the Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS); the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multisectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC); and the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD), Thailand is constructing layers of building blocks that support the development work of the United Nations.

We have shown through our actions that assistance for development is not just a one-way road from North to South. The countries of the South can significantly help one another to prosper together through South-South cooperation. Here, we in Thailand have been working closely with other developing countries, sharing our experiences and best practices, especially in areas in which Thailand has expertise, such as agricultural development and public health.

Marginalization breeds resentment and anger, both of which are fertile ground for extremism to flourish. Development helps to prevent this. Putting a human face on globalization is as vital as it is urgent. Together, we can create an environment conducive to turning back the tide of violent extremism and discrediting the appeal of terrorism. Religious and cultural identities must also be recognized and respected. This is unity in diversity. This is the path of moderation and understanding. This is also a peaceful way to fight violence and terrorism. Here, we must condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, by whomever committed, wherever and for whatever purposes.

We have so much on our agenda. The road ahead will not be an easy one. We must work together to ensure that we can build strength from diversity, with a very strong sense of shared responsibility. Let us make the United Nations truly serve the people, no matter who they are and no matter where they are. Let us ensure that "We the peoples of the United Nations" can truly live our lives "in larger freedom", as envisioned by our founding fathers 60 years ago.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Vartan Oskanian, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Armenia.

Mr. Oskanian (Armenia): Let me first welcome you, Sir, to your position. I know we will enjoy working with you, given our past experience. Let me also express our appreciation to the outgoing President for the leadership that he provided during the previous session.

When the Millennium Summit was held in 2000, in another New York and another era and before unspeakable events overtook our agenda, the lack of universal economic development was the supreme challenge and security concern that we had. That is why the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were created. It took the commitment and firm belief of almost 200 of our world leaders to come up with simple, obvious, straightforward objectives, which I think can be best summed up by Amartya Sen's eloquent formulation, "Development as freedom". Five years later, I think these goals are still relevant and they are no less imperative. Pretending that anything less would do is, I think, disingenuous, dangerous and unfair.

If, today, our focus is on global security, and we all clearly understand and see that the path to security passes through development, then we should recall Eleanor Roosevelt, who 60 years ago, working on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, stated that men in need were not free. Indeed, only with the realization of these Goals can we enable men to live in greater freedom.

In Armenia, where our resources are very limited but the will of people is very strong, we have been experiencing good economic growth. In the past four or five years, we have indeed seen double-digit economic growth, and we understand that our biggest challenge today is to translate that high economic growth into progress in human development. Each year in Armenia we look forward to the publication of the Human Development Report because we see it as a sort of report card that shows how our country is doing. In the past four or five years we have been making steady progress. This year we placed eighty-third, ahead of all of our neighbours.

While we should not underestimate this progress, on the other hand, we do not want to exaggerate it. We have to look at this index, at its promise, and see what problems we facing that we need to address and what gaps need to be filled.

First, we have to accelerate our efforts to reduce the level of poverty in our country. Societies are judged by the way they treat their most vulnerable. In Armenia, the poor are in the rural areas and we have to make sure that economic development can trickle out to our rural areas from the cities. For us, economic development is comprehensive rural development. It is our plan to identify those areas that can provide opportunity for rural people so that they can develop and unleash their capacity for production. Just as with the MDGs, there must be a partnership between rich and poor. In our case, we are trying to create such a partnership so that we reduce the numbers of poor in our country more rapidly.

Secondly, we have to turn democracy into a tool for development. Democracy means not only elections. Democracy and democratic institutions are not simply ends for their own sake. They have to provide, and they will provide, a better environment for political and economic development. We think we need to create transparent, solid, open institutions so that we can limit the action of the elite, and create a level playing field for the entire population.

We are pleased with the ranking that we have achieved. But we are satisfied only because we know we have achieved this against all odds: against our geography, against our history and against attempts in our region to isolate Armenia.

Armenia is a small, landlocked country. We do not have the natural resources our neighbours have. It has become customary to say that our greatest natural resource is our population, and indeed it is. But let me say that, if we had the oil resources, we would have used those revenues to double our education budget, because we understand that education is development. Education creates dreams for our youth and provides the means to achieve them. If we had the oil revenues, we would double our social security budget, because we clearly see that there is a gap between the dreams of our people and the prospects of achieving them. If we had the oil revenues, we would double our efforts in the area of environmental protection, because that is the best investment a society can make.

But one thing we would not do is to double our military budget. We will not create imaginary outside enemies to justify our own inaction and failures. We will not pretend that there are simplistic, fanatical solutions to complicated social and economic problems. In other words, we think the military option is not available as a tool in domestic and foreign policy.

When it comes to regional conflicts, advocating military solutions is not only unrealistic but is also a clear manifestation of a patent lack of understanding of democracy, rule of law and human rights. The founders of this institution, the United Nations, clearly indicated and knew that security, development and human rights go hand in hand.

But self-determination is a human right and the people of Nagorny Karabakh have aspired to it, fought for it and earned it. They had to face the aggression of a Government they did not choose, but they fought for self-determination and they earned it. It was a fight that was not of their choosing and the right they fought for was neither abstract nor excessive. What they want is what we all want, the right to live on their own land, in their own homes, in dignity, safety and security.

The people of Karabakh have achieved that, and subsequently they have demonstrated to the world that they can sustain their de facto independence, that they can rule themselves, create democratic institutions and conduct elections.

Countries like mine come to such gatherings and meetings with huge expectations, because we want to contribute, to participate and to be involved in the give and take. But, if you think that because I am the Minister for Foreign Affairs of what is obviously a small country, and frankly, an imperfect one, I do not have the right to expound on our common future, allow me for a moment to speak, not as a foreign minister, but as a citizen of the world.

The prospect of United Nations reform is only the beginning of achieving the promise of a world Organization that would better resemble the realities of the current world. If we cannot find common ground, if we cannot agree to reform this institution today or tomorrow or next week or this year, I believe that one day we will have to do it. We cannot simply go on pretending that we do not know our history. We cannot go on pretending that the world has not changed. We cannot go on pretending that we do not understand that there are new realities. It is not 1945 any longer.

Still, it is very encouraging that the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter — written three generations ago — remain valid, relevant and

significant today. That is because the spirit of San Francisco in 1945, and the global Charter that was forged there, were revolutionary. The Charter affirmed the obligation and accountability of one generation to another, of one State to another other, and that together, States can and must create a safer world. The formula that was worked out then to achieve those goals worked.

Today, we need to rework that formula, reaffirming, first and foremost, our responsibility and accountability to our citizens and Governments, the responsibility of international institutions to their members and of States to each other.

We need to democratize international relations and international institutions. We need fair, earned representation around the decision-making table. Earned representation: that is, countries that are committed to democracy, human rights and the rule of law should have the right to sit on the Human Rights Council; countries that are serious about social and economic development should occupy seats on the Economic and Social Council; and countries that are committed to world peace and security, that are serious about the dignity of the world community, should assume a leadership role in the world community.

Those are not ambitious goals. It is only natural that our national interests will differ. That is why the United Nations must step in to fill the gap, enabling us to work together in exchange for commitment and action.

It all boils down to our accountability to our children. What will we say to our children if we do not achieve the Millennium Development Goals in the next decade, when we are living in an era that has witnessed the creation of huge wealth in the world economy, but where half of the world's population still lives in poverty, far from benefiting from the fruit of that growth? What if we, in our region, miss the opportunity to make peace and put war, its consequences and its legacy, behind us? How, then, are we going to be able to look our children in the face? What if we reject that chance to learn from our past, to come to terms with our history, if we refuse to take our common and joint responsibility to intervene and prevent conflict, letting Governments time and again commit torture, ethnic cleansing and genocide against their own populations? What will we then tell our children?

When the United Nations was created 60 years ago, it gave the people of the world hope and faith in their leaders, in their future and in the lives of their children. Today, having witnessed the huge calamities and catastrophes, both man-made and natural, which have occurred recently, there is a clear need to restore the faith of the peoples of the world.

Looking at the damage caused by last year's Asian tsunami and the recent Hurricane Katrina, looking at the violence that is being perpetrated in Darfur and the carnage that we witnessed in London, we are questioning ourselves, our neighbours and our assumptions. The answer must be united momentum, united effort, united resources and united action by nations united. The United Nations can still be that answer.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Elmar Maharram oglu Mammadyarov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Mammadyarov (Azerbaijan): At the outset I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to the presidency of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly. I have known you personally for a long time as a very skilful and highly professional diplomat and I wish you every success in making new achievements in that highly responsible post. I would also like to express our appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping, for the competence and dedication with which he guided the work of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

While it is too early to assess the impact of the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1) adopted at the High-level Plenary Meeting, I will venture to say that the path leading up to it was thorny, if not challenging, at times.

Azerbaijan has always been and will remain committed to the purposes, principles and values enshrined in the United Nations Charter and other landmark documents. Respect for the norms and principles of international law and diligent observance of international obligations by Member States serve as indicators of their adherence to those values and principles.

Azerbaijan fully supports a collective approach to security. We are committed to taking concerted action, in conformity with the United Nations Charter, to remove threats to peace and security, foster sustainable

economic development and support democracy-building and protection of human rights.

We reaffirm our determination to continue the reforms that will eventually improve the functional capacity of the United Nations and its decision-making processes, especially with regard to crisis and conflict management.

Since our accession to the United Nations, the Organization has been closely associated in our society with our hopes for the liberation of the territories of Azerbaijan occupied by Armenia. Although the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is deeply involved in the settlement process, the prompt response of the Security Council to the occupation of the territories of Azerbaijan and the adoption of four Security Council resolutions — 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993) — still gives us hope for the peaceful settlement of the conflict in and around the Nagorny Karabakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The principles unanimously adopted by the Security Council in those resolutions continue to be the basis for the settlement of the conflict.

Last year the General Assembly's consideration of the agenda item entitled "The situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan" played a crucial role in attracting attention to the dangerous practices carried out by Armenia in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

As for the negotiation process itself, I must admit that we are now at a critical juncture where the chances for resolution of the conflict are cautiously optimistic. The Government of Azerbaijan remains committed to the peaceful settlement of this protracted conflict, based on respect for the norms and principles of international law, the implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions and related OSCE documents and decisions. We expect that the Armenian side will take a similarly constructive approach and will not miss this window of opportunity.

There is no room for illusions. Azerbaijan will never compromise its territorial integrity. Only the return of all the occupied territories to Azerbaijan will help restore our trust and confidence in Armenia and its declared intention of establishing good-neighbourly relations with Azerbaijan. Such a step would remove the label of aggressor from the Government of Armenia — a label it inherited after it occupied the territories of Azerbaijan — and allow both parties to benefit from the opportunities the settlement of the conflict will bring.

We are ready to provide security assurances for the Armenian population of the Nagorny Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. As for the status of the region, it is necessary to create favourable conditions for the secure and dignified return of the expelled Azerbaijani population to the Nagorny Karabakh region and to other occupied territories, to establish normal living conditions there and to provide opportunities for economic development for both communities.

Once the agreement is achieved, for both political and legal guarantees of its implementation we will need the international community's support for the deployment of multinational peacekeeping forces, demining, the restoration of communications, the rehabilitation of lands and the provision of security guarantees for the population in the Nagorny Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, including the creation of local police forces in the region for both Armenian and Azerbaijani communities.

Last but not least, I should like to make a point on conflict resolution. It concerns the issue of the communication of Armenians living in the Nagorny Karabakh region of Azerbaijan with Armenia and that of Azerbaijanis living in the Nakhchivan region of Azerbaijan with the rest of the country. We suggest that the so-called Lachin corridor — which should be called a road of peace — be used by both sides in both directions, provided that security on the road is ensured by the multinational peacekeeping force in the initial stage.

The road's importance extends beyond the practical benefits of direct transport communications between Armenia and Azerbaijan; the road should be considered, first and foremost, as the path leading to peace and cooperation in the South Caucasus region. Today, from this rostrum, after the recent meeting of the Presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia, held in Kazan on 26 August 2005, I urge the Armenian side not to miss this opportunity to move the negotiation process forward with the assistance of the Co-Chairmen of the OSCE Minsk Group, in accordance with the key understandings reached in the Prague process.

Azerbaijan believes that development reinforces democratic transformation, the rule of law and respect

for human rights. We agree that it is urgent and important to achieve the international development agenda. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) remain an indispensable part of that agenda and represent measures of States' contributions to and impacts on global efforts in their quest for a better existence.

Cooperation in the areas of debt, assistance and trade can open up new opportunities for development financing and can reinforce national efforts to mobilize needed resources. Here, the special development needs of Africa deserve serious attention. Azerbaijan therefore welcomes the recent decision by the Group of Eight Governments to cancel the debt of heavily indebted poor countries.

We also consider official development assistance to be an important investment in self-sustaining development. We firmly believe that, if aid is to be effective, greater interagency coordination is required at all levels. The United Nations Development Group and the United Nations Resident Coordinator have a critical role to play in this field. We fully support the strengthening of both structures.

Yet another area requiring increased cooperation is international trade. Addressing issues related to improving market access and terms of trade as well as overcoming supply side constraints can revive the Doha round. Azerbaijan believes that the 2005 world summit will renew the sense of urgency to build strong political will and a coherent policy approach aimed at creating a more favourable multilateral trade system during the forthcoming ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organization, to be held in Hong Kong. In the meantime, we believe that the development challenges of landlocked developing countries should be effectively addressed, bearing in mind the recently adopted Asunción Platform for the Doha Development Round.

We recognize the crucial role of regional organizations, including United Nations regional commissions, in enhancing regional cooperation to promote sustainable development. Azerbaijan places emphasis on the development of transregional transport and communication lines and makes its contribution through the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline and the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzerum natural gas pipeline. We also look forward to the building of a new Baku-Akhalkalaki-Tbilisi-Kars railroad.

Azerbaijan is committed to poverty eradication and has identified it as an overarching goal in its development strategies. Although we are encouraged by the implementation perspectives presented in the report of the Millennium Project, we highlight the need for assistance to complement the efforts of national leadership, especially in the areas of capacity-building, science and technology and environmental protection.

The achievement of the Millennium Development Goals requires not only public investment in infrastructure and human capital, but also investment in improving governance, which includes an efficient, properly resourced and adequately staffed institutional system as well as political accountability, transparency and participation. Azerbaijan attaches particular importance to progress in this area. In recognition of the central role of good governance in poverty reduction and development, we have formulated additional national MDGs to address governance issues. Specific targets in that area include, inter alia, reform of the overall State system of public administration, legislation and policy by the year 2015.

Recognizing the destructive effects of natural disasters on the sustainable development of countries and communities, Azerbaijan, as a disaster-prone country, believes that efforts aimed at disaster mitigation should place particular emphasis on awareness-raising programmes and on the development of early warning capacities.

It is clear that national ownership of the design, implementation and coordination of humanitarian response and transition programmes in both post-disaster and post-conflict situations is essential to ensure the desired impact and the sustainability of such programmes. However, there is a need for the efficient sharing of responsibilities between national authorities and international humanitarian and development actors, particularly in protracted humanitarian situations with mass displacement and limited national capacities to tackle all existing problems. Humanitarian assistance and funding should not be limited to providing immediate responses to crises; they must take into account long-term needs in the transition phase.

Promoting human rights and the rule of law has been an integral part of our national development strategy as a result of our conviction that the full enjoyment of human rights, while a goal in itself, serves as a foundation for sustainable development. We

need to increase our ability to deal with human rights challenges and to adequately respond to them, particularly in times of conflict and crisis.

In conclusion, I would like to assure the Assembly that Azerbaijan will remain committed to the ideals that are the foundation of the Organization, and to express my confidence that at this critical juncture for multilateralism, the international community will spare no effort to make the United Nations more efficient and more relevant to the needs of its Member States.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Rafael Antonio Bielsa, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship of the Argentine Republic.

Mr. Bielsa (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to preside over the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. I am convinced that your talent will enable us to take useful decisions. You can count on the full cooperation of my delegation. I also thank the Secretary-General for his efforts to renew the Organization and his work on behalf of the international community.

This general debate is being held after the summit to review the implementation of the Millennium Goals, in which many heads of State or Government participated, including the President of my country. The work accomplished by the President at that Meeting will help to overcome the difficulties facing the Organization.

For the Argentine Republic, respect for the rule of law is an essential premise. We believe that democracy is a universal value that is not the heritage of any country or region in particular. Day after day, we strive to improve its quality and to ensure the rule of law and the impartiality and independence of our judiciary.

Mr. Singh (India), Vice-President took the Chair.

Respect for human rights, whose protective norms form part of our Constitution, is another of our concerns. In my country, promoting and protecting human rights is a State policy that is part of our democratic identity as a nation and therefore is one of the main underpinnings of our foreign policy.

Defending the right to life and the right to dignity of men and women throughout the world does not allow half-hearted words or half-hearted solutions. That is due to the importance that human rights have acquired in the international arena as a factor in the preservation of peace, development and democracy, as well as in the cruel historic circumstances through which my country had to struggle.

We can never devote too much energy to promoting and protecting the human rights of all peoples of the world. Intolerance, censorship, torture and cruelty, even when they are presented as excesses committed in the name of beliefs, deny the validity of the forum in which we are now speaking, and they will continue to do so as long as they exist.

In the context of its lasting commitment to policies for social inclusion, my country, a few days ago, adopted a national plan against discrimination. It unconditionally supports the progress of the negotiations currently taking place in the Organization to achieve a comprehensive convention for people with disabilities and hopes that work on that convention will be completed in the course of the coming year.

International solidarity can do a great deal for those deprived of their fundamental rights and freedoms, especially as nobody expects such torments to come upon them. That is why, from the start of the discussions on United Nations reform, we have taken a very active stance to strengthen and perfect the universal system for the protection of human rights, making sure that those rights occupy the central position that is their rightful place.

There are few things in which men have not believed — as few as those things they did not expect. For that reason, in a country whose citizens were allowed to think that impunity is possible, those that survived must work to prevent history from being repeated.

We therefore support the creation of a Human Rights Council as an essential organ of the United Nations and to give the issue of human rights the same importance as that attached to development and security. During the ongoing negotiations, Argentina will work decisively to establish an organ that can carry out vigorous and effective action to promote and protect human rights in all the world.

Strengthening global justice is necessary to put a stop to massive human rights violations, genocide and crimes against humanity. Argentina is involved in the

fight against impunity for those crimes and unconditionally supports the International Criminal Court.

We welcome the adoption of Security Council resolution 1593 (2005), which refers the situation of Darfur to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court. That resolution represents a very important step in the strengthening of the institutions established under the Rome Statute. It is a historical precedent linked to the achievement of two main goals of the United Nations: peace and basic rights.

Argentina, which in its past suffered systematic violations of human rights characterized by torture, forced disappearances and summary executions of its citizens, has taken decisive steps through its domestic legislation to put an end to impunity. Our Supreme Court recently ruled that the general amnesty laws entitled "Punto Final" and "Obediencia debida" were unconstitutional and that they were an obstacle to attaining a postponed but necessary justice. Thus, we join the efforts to ensure that those accountable for crimes against humanity are tried and punished.

As the President of Argentina stated during the recent summit, Argentina unequivocally condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, regardless of the causes it invokes. Nothing can justify indiscriminate attacks on innocent civilians and non-combatants. We are strongly committed to fighting that grave threat to international peace and security.

Our response to terrorism must be ethical and morally valid, and must therefore be carried out in full respect of the United Nations Charter, the rule of law, international law, human rights, refugee law and humanitarian law.

Given that we have to protect others from fear, we must act in accordance with the principles of legitimacy and proportionality and with the support of international public opinion.

Argentina, the current Chair of the Security Council's 1267 (1999) Committee, responsible for monitoring implementation of the sanctions against members of the terrorist group Al-Qaida and the Taliban, believes that the United Nations has a central role to play in the coordinating the efforts and the development of international mechanisms. We must support those endeavours, particularly through the strict and full implementation of Security Council resolutions.

This year, my country ratified the 1999 International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism. With that ratification, it became a State party to the 12 international conventions to combat terrorism. And we have just signed the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism.

In spite of the efforts made, there has been an increase in the number of attacks. That requires a careful review and assessment of the objectives, methods and approaches employed, as well as an important effort by the international community to bring conflicts to an end soon, eliminate aggressive inequalities and achieve a fairer, more rational world.

There has recently been some important conceptual progress towards the completion of an international convention on terrorism. We hope that this instrument can soon be adopted.

My country — which suffered two very serious attacks, against the Israeli embassy in 1992 and against the Argentine-Israeli Mutual Association (AMIA) in Buenos Aires in 1994 — is determined to shed light on those heinous and unjustifiable criminal acts. Identifying and punishing the culprits is our deeply felt duty to the innocent victims and their families. It is also the desire of the Argentine people.

The United Nations is undergoing a reform process that must be transparent, thorough and adequate, and it must answer the urgent and undeniable demands of our peoples. All main organs of the United Nations should be thoroughly improved. The General Assembly, the principal deliberative and decision-taking authority, must find a way to ensure that its voice is heard throughout the world. The Economic and Social Council also needs to be thoroughly rethought and restructured to make it more effective.

A vast majority has called for enhancing the transparency and the effectiveness of the Security Council. As part of the Uniting for Consensus movement, Argentina will work for a Security Council that includes new members only within the category of non-permanent members, because we believe that we should not create new privileges contrary to the democratic spirit that should reign in the United Nations. Council members should be accountable for

their actions, and that can be achieved through periodic elections.

For its part, the Secretariat must continue its process of professionalization and universalization to better ensure its accountability and effectiveness.

Peacekeeping operations are among the most effective tools of the United Nations to bring peace and security to troubled peoples. Argentina is strongly committed to these operations, in which it has participated since 1958. Currently, we are contributing to eight of them.

In particular, I would highlight efforts being made in Haiti in the search for a peaceful and lasting solution to Haiti's serious challenges. We have long known that the response to crisis does not end with the establishment of a peacekeeping operation. Because of this, we have established complex operations able to promote stable solutions in all fields: namely security; the rule of law; justice; institution-building; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; social and economic development; human rights; and democracy.

That is why we stress the importance of establishing a Peacebuilding Commission.

Argentina supports the goals established at the Millennium Summit and at Johannesburg and Monterrey. Recent progress in development financing shows that while developing countries have made significant efforts to reform and streamline their economies, these efforts have not been accompanied by measures on the part of developed countries to fulfil the commitments adopted at those conferences.

Once again, we urge developed countries to allot 0.7 per cent of their gross domestic product for development assistance, to open their markets and to do away with subsidies. We support the Monterrey Consensus provisions on reform of the international financial system to adapt the system to the new challenges posed by the fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals.

We believe in the need to study and negotiate the creation of new international financial instruments that will prove more efficient in the ongoing fight against hunger and poverty.

I turn now to two topics that are of utmost importance to Argentina: first, the international trade situation. As the summit outcome document that we have adopted (resolution 60/1) states, international trade is a fundamental tool for economic and social development. It is, therefore, imperative that we establish fair, equitable and rule-based international trade that is inclusive and gives priority to development. The ongoing World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations in the context of the Doha development round are of key importance. It is essential for the WTO to promote a fair international trade system. Developed countries must eliminate protectionist measures in the form of subsidies, non-tariff barriers and arbitrary standards, which distort and limit commercial exchanges, especially in the agricultural sector.

The sixth WTO Ministerial Conference, to be held in Hong Kong, is drawing near, and there is still a great deal to be done. We hope that it will enable us to increase the indirect benefits to be gained through growing participation by developing countries in international trade.

Secondly, we must also deal with the question of external debt. International bodies must adopt effective, broad, equitable and lasting solutions to the problem of the debt of developing countries. The concept of sustainability of external debt must be redefined, bearing in mind the primary responsibility of the State to maintain and stimulate development in sectors such as health, education and promotion of employment. It is illogical to transform developing countries into relatively less-developed countries so that when the desperate moment arrives, the debt cancellation process can begin.

In conclusion, I also wish to refer here to the question of the Malvinas Islands. Recovery of the full exercise of sovereignty over the Malvinas, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas is among the national interests that are an essential component of Argentina's identity as a democratic nation. All Argentines are strongly committed to the peaceful settlement of this dispute; this commitment is a priority of my country's foreign policy and is enshrined in our Constitution. Argentina has repeatedly stated its willingness to resume negotiations on sovereignty, as took place between 1966 and 1982.

I wish to conclude by reiterating that we have an opportunity to renew this Organization so that it is

better equipped to meet the numerous demands of humanity. Everything we can achieve today will result in benefits for future generations. We shall cooperate with other United Nations Members to that end with due modesty, as any party expecting the same level of commitment from others would cooperate.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency The Right Honourable Sir Rabbie L. Namaliu, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration of Papua New Guinea.

Sir Rabbie L. Namaliu (Papua New Guinea): I bring greetings and congratulations to the President of the General Assembly from the Government and the people of Papua New Guinea on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations. I pledge my delegation's support in the discharge of his noble responsibilities. I would like to commend again His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping, Foreign Minister of Gabon, for his stewardship of the work of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. I also pay tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and his staff for their continued efforts in servicing the needs of Member States.

At the outset, I would like to convey the heartfelt sympathy and condolences of the people of Papua New Guinea to the Government of the United States of America and its people with respect to the loss of lives and the destruction of property in the Gulf states. We wish them well for a speedy recovery and in their reconstruction efforts.

The United Nations has come a long way since its inception in 1945. The focus on international peace and security remains relevant, although since then it has taken on new and different dimensions, including the evil of global terrorism.

The process of reform of the United Nations, particularly the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Secretariat must be reflective of the changing landscape of today's international realities. The membership of the Security Council, both permanent and non-permanent, must be expanded to include equitable representation from developing countries. Work on the reform agenda, as set out in the outcome document (resolution 60/1) of the High-level Plenary Meeting, must commence without any further delay. We strongly support the early resolution of all the outstanding issues, including those related to human rights and to disarmament.

Convening the recently concluded summit enabled us to see how much progress we have made in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in our respective countries. Despite the Government's efforts to achieve the MDGs, Papua New Guinea's scorecard indicates that much more needs to be done. We recognize that combating poverty, HIV/AIDS, child and maternal mortality and unemployment and promoting universal primary education and gender equality are major challenges for Papua New Guinea.

Important legislative, policy and administrative instruments are now being put in place. The Millennium Development Goals and targets have been incorporated into our medium-term development strategy, which ties the MDGs to our development programmes through the national budgetary process. I am happy to report that in July of this year the Papua New Guinea National Parliament endorsed a comprehensive national MDG report, compiled with the kind assistance of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This now paves the way for concrete efforts at all levels of Government and by all relevant stakeholders to implement its recommendations.

We are extremely concerned about the spread of HIV/AIDS in our country. Papua New Guinea has the highest incidence of reported cases in the Pacific region. Important national legislation and policies have been put in place to address all aspects of that scourge. These include placing the National AIDS Council directly under the auspices of the Prime Minister's department. Papua New Guinea therefore fully supports the efforts of the United Nations and the international community to address that scourge. We support in particular the leadership of the Secretary-General in mobilizing international resources for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and to combat other diseases.

Our development partners, including Australia, New Zealand, UNDP, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and other United Nations agencies, continue to support Papua New Guinea's efforts to address this critical issue. While we appreciate such valuable assistance, it must be coordinated effectively within the medium-term development strategy policy framework if it is to have maximum impact.

International finance, especially foreign direct investment and overseas development assistance, are vital instruments that can help developing countries such as mine to achieve the MDGs and other international commitments and obligations. Our Government is therefore committed to attracting foreign direct investment to assist us with development efforts in our country. At the same time, overseas development assistance must be used effectively, as measured against achievement of the national development goals and priorities set out in the medium-term development strategy.

While Papua New Guinea has a good debt-servicing record, debt repayments still place considerable strain on our ability to provide much-needed services to our people. They affect the country's ability to implement the MDGs, the outcome of the World Summit on Social Development and other important development commitments.

Papua New Guinea commends the European Union's assistance to help highly indebted poor countries (HIPC) with their debt servicing difficulties. Consideration, however, must also be given to other non-HIPC countries, such as mine, so that they can benefit from such goodwill and assistance. In this context, we support the proposal by President Macapagal-Arroyo of the Philippines to extend debt servicing assistance to highly indebted non-HIPC developing countries, including Papua New Guinea, under a debt-for-equity swap arrangement.

Trade is the engine of economic growth and development. It is a critical prerequisite for sustained efforts to achieve socio-economic development, including the MDGs. Papua New Guinea was heartened to hear some leaders of major developed and developing countries at the summit indicating firm commitments to address the current distortions on international trade regarding the elimination of agricultural subsidies and other trade barriers. That is a positive signal of a move towards the creation of an open, equitable and rule-based international trading system.

The ongoing Doha round of negotiations, as well as the economic partnership agreement negotiations between the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries must place greater emphasis on development. The particular development needs of small island developing States — the result of their physical and structural disadvantages — must also be given priority in the negotiating process.

As a young democracy, Papua New Guinea is committed to fighting corruption and upholding the principles of good governance and the rule of law. Corruption, in particular, is the main impediment to progress and development in developing countries such as Papua New Guinea. The victims of corruption are the poor, who are deprived of basic goods and services. That is a great challenge for us, and we are determined to combat it. Taking a step forward, Papua New Guinea has ratified the United Nations Convention Against Corruption. Other policies and administrative and legislative measures have been put in place, along with existing constitutional provisions on the leadership code governing the conduct of leaders.

The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is a also a major threat to the peace and security of our country. Small arms and light weapons almost destroyed our country. The Bougainville crisis was fuelled by large quantities of small arms and light weapons. Papua New Guinea will seek the cooperation and support of neighbouring countries to put an end to the traffic in small arms and light weapons to the region. We therefore support the ongoing work at the United Nations to address that critical issue.

The resolution of the Bougainville crisis was a success story for the United Nations in the history of peacekeeping efforts throughout the world. We thank the United Nations — especially the Security Council and the Secretary-General — and our friends in the Pacific region, including Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Tonga, for assisting us in concluding the peace process. Peace and normalcy are now being consolidated, with the election of the first Autonomous Government by the people of Bougainville. They must be strengthened through social and economic development throughout the island. Basic goods and services are being restored and the infrastructure redeveloped on the island, but we will require the continued support of the international community in those efforts. We also look forward to the assistance of the proposed Peacebuilding Commission in such endeavours.

Papua New Guinea, like many other small island developing States, suffers from natural disasters, such as volcanic eruptions, floods, cyclones, landslides, droughts and even tsunamis. The ongoing and never-

ending cycle of natural disasters continues to pose great difficulties for Papua New Guinea's achievement of social and economic progress, including its achievement of the MDGs and other development objectives. Papua New Guinea therefore supports the establishment of early warning systems for all natural disasters and hazards.

Papua New Guinea's coexistence with the environment was enshrined in the preamble of our national Constitution at the time of the country's independence in 1975. That constitutional imperative guided our commitment to implement the sustainable development goals and objectives resulting from the Rio Earth Summit, including the World Summit on Social Development outcome, the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and, more recently, the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action.

Those multilateral commitments are vital if we are to ensure the proper management of our country's rich natural resources and address critical issues, such as poverty eradication, climate change, sea-level rise and natural-disaster management.

Legal and policy frameworks have been put in place to enable us to pursue development in a sustainable manner. Our Government is committed to undertaking economic development activities, such as mining, forestry and agriculture, in a sustainable manner.

We call upon the United Nations and the international community to recognize the weakest, smallest and most vulnerable peoples of the small island developing States. The recently adopted Mauritius Strategy identifies certain commitments that must be fulfilled if we are to address the sustainable development and other development aspirations of small island developing States. The international community must, including at this General Assembly session, translate those commitments into action, through projects relating to water, sanitation and renewable energy and by addressing training and capacity-development needs. In this regard, we support the call for the mobilization of financial resources on a more predictable basis so as to implement the strategy as articulated in the summit outcome document.

As a Member of the United Nations, we emphasize that all nations have a critical responsibility to address climate change, including sea-level rise. If we are to achieve lasting climatic stability, we must have a global commitment to the objectives of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The relationship between environmental sustainability and poverty is becoming increasingly clear. Papua New Guinea is therefore of the view that, when addressing tropical forestry, the world must better align market incentives with sustainable outcomes.

In the forested rural areas of my country, the only real options for economic growth often require the destruction of natural forests — either when clearing for agricultural commodities such as coffee, or through the sale of hardwood timber. Furthermore, the International Panel on Climate Change found that, during the 1990s, an estimated 20 to 25 per cent of annual global carbon emissions were generated through land-use change, primarily from the degradation of forest resources. That is the second largest source of global carbon emissions — second only to the combustion of fossil fuels. That has to change if we are to take responsibility to help with issues related to climate change.

Papua New Guinea is part of a new Coalition for Rainforest Nations, including Costa Rica and other countries, and is requesting a global discussion on access for ecosystem services to the global carbon markets as a means to alleviate this problem. Simply put, the present incentives offered by international markets for agriculture, forestry and emissions reductions lead directly to deforestation, environmental degradation and further poverty. We invite more like-minded nations to join our efforts to create new markets and to reform outmoded market and regulatory mechanisms. That is necessary if we are to contribute more effectively to environmental sustainability, economic development, climate stability and poverty reduction.

Oceans and fisheries issues are critical to Papua New Guinea and to other Pacific island countries. Oceans and fisheries sustain the livelihood and well-being of our people and contribute significantly to our small economies. Sustainable development is a priority for Pacific island countries, including Papua New Guinea. We are concerned about the ongoing illegal fishing activities in the region. We require the support and assistance of development partners with technical capacities to strengthen our surveillance capabilities

and with regulatory regimes to address these issues of vital importance.

Papua New Guinea fully supports the entry into force of the Western and Central Pacific Tuna Convention. Papua New Guinea welcomes any assistance that United Nations agencies — including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations — and other bilateral and multilateral partners can provide to permit effective functioning of the Convention secretariat.

The security of Pacific island countries depends on the collective security efforts of the region and of the wider Asia-Pacific region. Our regional security cooperation is attested to in the successful mission carried out by the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands, organized under the aegis of the Pacific Islands Forum.

Papua New Guinea condemns international terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Our support in the fight against this evil is unwavering and resolute. We have ratified most of the counter-terrorism treaties, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1373 (2001). However, our efforts are being hampered by technical and resource constraints; hence the need for the support and assistance of the international community to ensure effective implementation of those commitments.

Over the years, Papua New Guinea has called for bold decisions and leadership on the part of both Israel and Palestine to exercise restraint and resolve their disputes through peaceful means. We commend Prime Minister Sharon and President Abbas for their bold and strong leadership towards the resolution of this long-standing issue.

We fully support the positive efforts being carried out in Iraq and Afghanistan as democracy and the rule of law take root. These will be enhanced through economic and social development as well as through vital infrastructure development. Those efforts, however, must be supported by the international community.

We are halfway through the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. Progress must be made to ensure that all the remaining 16 non-self-governing territories, including New Caledonia, exercise their inalienable right to self-determination by 2010. We are following the positive developments taking place in Tokelau, where the Government of New Zealand is helping the people to freely exercise their right to self-determination.

South-South cooperation among developing countries is critical. It paves the way for enhanced trade relations and cooperation in areas related to the transfer of technology and know-how to address issues affecting those countries, including the fight against HIV/AIDS and the eradication of poverty. Papua New Guinea welcomes the establishment of the South Fund for Development and Humanitarian Assistance and the Government of Qatar's initial pledge to contribute $20 million to the Fund. We commend the pledges by India and China to contribute $2 million each to the Fund. It is a significant step forward for developing countries to assist needy Members, including small island countries with vulnerable economies. We call upon the developed countries to recognize this valuable effort and to provide support to the Fund.

Papua New Guinea will assume the chairmanship of the Pacific Islands Forum commencing in October. As Chair, Papua New Guinea will provide leadership in our collective efforts to address critical issues facing member countries, including the adoption of the Pacific Plan, which is built upon four main pillars, namely regional security, economic growth, sustainable development and good governance in the region. It must become a vehicle for translating the Mauritius Strategy and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the High-level Plenary Meeting into action on the ground in our respective member countries. We therefore welcome the support of our development partners in the implementation of the Plan after its adoption at the upcoming Forum meeting to be held at Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, in October this year.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Charles Murigande, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation of Rwanda.

Mr. Murigande (Rwanda): Allow me to begin by congratulating the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session, Mr. Jean Ping of Gabon, and all Member States on the successful adoption of the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1). The summit outcome document was the product of months of consultations and negotiations. We wish to we pay tribute to Mr. Ping for skilfully guiding the process to its conclusion. We also wish to congratulate Mr. Jan

Eliasson on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. Let me assure him of my delegation's full support and cooperation in the tasks that lie ahead in this session.

By adopting the summit outcome document, we reaffirmed our belief in the purposes and principles of the United Nations and agreed to take appropriate and urgent steps to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We also committed ourselves to renewing the Organization to make it more efficient, effective and transparent so that it can be more responsive to the numerous and varied challenges and expectations of our times and, indeed, can save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, maintain international peace and security, develop friendly relations among nations and, most important, promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.

We must work together in a serious and concerted manner to achieve the MDGs and other goals outlined in the summit outcome document. We must create a world that is free from hunger, poverty and deprivation. We must create a world of greater economic opportunity for developing countries. We must create a world in which people are free to live in dignity, a world that does not tolerate — or fail to respond by protecting populations under threat of — genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing or crimes against humanity. This is no time for business as usual. We must be urgent and focused in our action.

It is a matter of great concern to us all that if current trends persist, many African countries will not achieve most of the MDGs by 2015. Some African countries have actually regressed since 2000 in their efforts to achieve MDG targets. Poverty, hunger and infectious diseases lay waste entire communities and nations, often exacerbate the effects of war and conflict, and make the prospects for recovery infinitely more problematic. Urgent action needs to be taken to reverse those trends.

We need greater commitment from developed countries, particularly with respect to increasing official development assistance to at least 0.7 per cent of gross national income, freer and fairer trade and debt cancellation. Let me remind the Assembly that the target of 0.7 per cent of the gross national income for official development assistance was set by our Assembly more than 40 years ago and that, as we speak, only five countries have reached it. The time for speeches and debate is over. We must have action on those issues.

Most of us have now come to understand the interconnectedness and interdependence of all nations around the world and the nexus between security and development. Poverty, hunger and deprivation in sub-Saharan Africa are bad for peace and security in all 191 nations represented here today. By recognizing that interdependence, we accept that there are collective responsibilities and obligations, as well as collective benefits and opportunities. The responsibilities include, in the words of the Charter, to "promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom". We can have neither security without development nor development without security at the national, regional and international levels. It is both unacceptable and unsustainable for one half of the world to live amid wealth and plenty while the other half dies from disease and hunger.

Our Governments are judged according to their actions, not according to ideals or principles. Similarly, the United Nations should be judged according to its actions, not according to the values and principles laid out in the Charter. It is our experience that, while the United Nations is immaculate in its values and principles, it has all too often been found wanting in its actions. If there is any advice we can offer to the United Nations on its sixtieth birthday, the advice would be that it must learn from its mistakes and be more effective in implementation.

There are probably no States members of this Assembly apart from Rwanda where the United Nations has consistently neglected to learn from its mistakes, resulting in massive loss of life and untold misery. Allow me to explain. It was in 1959, while Rwanda was still under United Nations trusteeship, that the first acts of genocide against Tutsis took place there, leading to the first mass refugee problem on the African continent. The United Nations watched unmoved and no action was ever taken. In the years following 1959, the United Nations stood by in silence and inaction as pogroms took place throughout the country, resulting in massive loss of life and compounding the refugee crisis.

More recently, in 1994, while the United Nations had a huge political and military presence in Rwanda, it watched without taking action the planning and

implementation of genocide. We all recall the shocking decision of the Security Council to withdraw peacekeepers at a time when hundreds of thousands of defenceless people needed them most.

When the genocide was totally consummated, the Security Council mandated one of its members to send troops to the country, which only succeeded in allowing the perpetrators of the genocide safe passage out of Rwanda and into the Democratic Republic of the Congo, from where they have been a major source of insecurity and instability for the entire subregion. Over the last 11 years, our repeated appeals to disarm and demobilize those genocidal forces have, if not fallen of deaf ears, yielded no results.

I raise those examples to highlight the fact that Rwanda is probably the country most interested in United Nations reform. We wish to take back home from this meeting a message of hope and a promise to our people that we have reinvented a United Nations that will never betray them again.

My Government welcomes the endorsement of the "responsibility to protect" in the summit outcome document. The responsibility to protect includes a responsibility to prevent genocide, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing, as well as a responsibility to prevent incitement to commit those crimes.

But here again, action, not words, will be the measure of our success or failure. How will the United Nations respond the next time action to protect populations is required? Will there be lengthy academic and legal debates on what constitutes genocide or crimes against humanity, while people die?

What is clear to us is that no nation or people should have to face the horrors that we faced 11 years ago. Where a State is unable or unwilling to protect its people, as was the case in Rwanda in 1994, then the responsibility to provide such protection should — and indeed must — shift immediately to the international community. Such action should be taken by the Security Council in a timely and decisive manner in order to save the lives of populations under threat. Our pledge of "never again" to genocide should not ring hollow the next time we are confronted with such crimes.

A collective international response to genocide includes a responsibility for all States to combat impunity and bring to justice any persons accused of having committed such crimes. We find it inexplicable that, while some States profess commitment to the Charter, human rights and international law, they allow known suspects of the Rwanda genocide to live in their countries and take no action to apprehend them and transfer them to the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda or to Rwanda for prosecution. Those States must be challenged, if necessary by the Security Council, to fulfil their international obligations to apprehend and transfer those fugitives for prosecution.

Rwanda, as a country emerging from conflict, understands better the usefulness of and strongly supports the plans to establish a peacebuilding commission. We have indeed seen the United Nations spend hundreds of millions of dollars, if not billions, on peacekeeping missions that leave behind no repaired road or bridge, no rehabilitated school or health centre in the countries where they have been deployed. Instead, they leave behind children who will never know their fathers and are most vulnerable to poverty. Those resources could be better spent to create lasting peace and stability.

We must, however, ensure that the commission does not become another bureaucracy that is difficult to access and out of touch with the realities in countries emerging from conflict. It should take a long-term approach to post-conflict recovery and change the current practice whereby short-term approaches to long-standing conflicts mean that we apply mere "band-aid" solutions to highly complex situations.

The Commission should consult actively and widely with the countries affected and those countries that have successfully emerged from conflict in the recent past. It must also ensure local ownership of solutions and outcomes so that its work can be sustainable.

We believe that the Security Council should be reformed to improve its transparency and accountability. The reform process should enable States that are not members of the Council to participate more actively in its deliberative processes, especially on issues that affect them. A reformed Council should be seen by all States to be more accessible, transparent and credible.

Terrorism continues to brutally kill innocent civilians. We must all join hands to fight that evil of our times. My country will continue to lend its support

to international efforts to combat terrorism. We welcome the decision to negotiate and conclude a comprehensive convention against terrorism and my country stands ready to partake in that effort. We believe, however, that what is lacking is not a convention but a universally shared commitment to fight the evil. After all, in 1994, we had a Convention against genocide that was 46 years old, and yet genocide occurred in my country.

Turning to issues closer to home, we welcome the progress made in the peace process in Burundi. We congratulate the newly elected Government and stand ready to work closely with the Government and people of Burundi and the international community to consolidate that commendable progress.

We also welcome the progress being made in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where the Transitional Government has prepared a draft constitution and has begun the process of registering voters for elections. Progress is also being made with respect to the integration of the armed forces. We welcome all those developments, recognizing that they contribute to sustainable peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the wider region. We also stand ready to continue to support the transition process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We would also like to take this opportunity to renew our commitment and support for the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. My Government looks forward to the forthcoming second summit, to be held in Nairobi in December. The summit must come up with concrete measures to deal decisively with the menace of the genocidal militias that continue to roam freely in the region and frustrate our collective peace efforts.

My Government's commitment to peace and security in the region is demonstrated through our participation in the peacekeeping Mission in the Sudan, where Rwanda is the biggest troop contributor.

The role of the international community is critical. In that connection, we would like to pay special tribute to the United States Government for its assistance and support, which have led to the establishment of a tripartite mechanism comprising the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda to examine and resolve issues that could result in tensions between the three countries.

We also welcome the role of the African Union and the United Nations in advancing the prospects for sustainable peace and security in the region.

Finally, let us this time build a United Nations that, in addition to having good words to say about life, is one which nourishes and protects life all over the world.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Artis Pabriks, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Latvia.

Mr. Pabriks (Latvia): Today, I would like to begin by congratulating the founding nations and all those present here today as we celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations, which can be proud of so many great accomplishments.

Since its foundation in 1945, the United Nations has helped to negotiate an end to over 170 regional conflicts and has deployed more than 35 peacekeeping missions. It is leading international efforts to clear land mines from former zones of warfare. It has provided aid to tens of millions of refugees fleeing war, famine and persecution. It has focused the world's attention on issues of human rights. It provides annual disbursements that amount to $10 billion per year for various development programmes. It has made safe drinking water available to 1.3 billion people during the last decade. It has helped to eradicate smallpox from the globe, with polio set to follow soon. It has helped to reduce world child mortality rates by half since 1960. It has improved education in the developing countries, where 60 per cent of adults can now read and write. It provides over 2 million tons of food to victims of emergencies every year. About 30 million people in 36 different countries benefited from such assistance in 2004 alone. And it has hosted a variety of significant events, such as the Rio Conference on Environment and Development, which resulted in important treaties on biodiversity and climate change.

The vast majority of the United Nations employees over the years have been guided by a profound sense of duty. I would like to single out those responsible and dedicated workers who provide humanitarian assistance in the poorest regions of the globe, in zones of conflict, and in places that have been affected by natural disasters. We should pay tribute to all those who have lost their lives in the service of humanity, like the lamented Sergio Vieiro de Mello,

who was killed while leading the United Nations work in Iraq.

The world needs the United Nations. It needs the United Nations today as much as it did 60 years ago. We need a United Nations that is more and more efficient in dealing with global challenges and able to act efficiently to prevent such horrors as the genocide in Rwanda, the ethnic cleansing in the Balkans, and the ongoing human tragedy in the Darfur region of the Sudan. While such values and principles as national sovereignty, non-intervention and self-determination lie at the very core of relations between the United Nations Member States, we also have to recognize our collective responsibility to protect innocent civilians from wide-scale abuse and suffering. It is our duty to arrive at a common understanding of that responsibility to protect so that the international community can act efficiently to avert future mass killings and crimes against humanity. I encourage those United Nations Member States that have not yet done so to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and to support the Court's endeavours to bring war criminals to justice.

When the United Nations was created, my country, Latvia, was an occupied country and had no say in the rules that govern the Organization. It was therefore a particular honour that the President of Latvia was chosen as a Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for promoting reforms within the United Nations during the past six months. I am delighted that, in some aspects, we have succeeded in reaching a broad consensus, as for instance on the necessity of creating a peacebuilding commission. However, we still do not have a common understanding regarding many other reforms that need to be carried out. It is our shared responsibility to arrive at such an understanding soon.

As we work to strengthen the United Nations, we should ensure better cooperation and practices and avoid duplication of effort. Latvia strongly supports the decision to establish a Human Rights Council, which recognizes human rights as a priority on the United Nations agenda. I therefore encourage delegations to work with vigour to ensure the smooth transformation of the Human Rights Commission into a council and to set the highest standards for its future members. A vital role in the realization of those standards will be played by the High Commissioner for Human Rights. I wish to confirm Latvia's support for the Commissioner and her Office, and welcome the decision to allocate a larger share of the United Nations regular budget to that important aspect of its work.

My country fully supports the management reforms of the United Nations administration that have been put forth by the Secretary-General. The reforms would afford the Secretary-General greater authority within certain fields of the United Nations activities, as well as greater responsibilities. The reforms would also contribute to the transparency and professionalism of the Secretariat, which has been justly criticized for serious deficiencies in its work. I am pleased that the United Nations leadership is willing to propose viable changes for improving the operations of the Secretariat. It is now up to the Member States to arrive at a consensus upon those proposed measures.

Latvia has consistently endorsed reform of the Security Council in order to render it more effective and representative. We believe that the Security Council should be enlarged to incorporate new permanent seats without veto rights. We also believe that the permanent members of the Security Council should refrain from using the veto in cases of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. That promises to be one of the most difficult issues to resolve, but we should nevertheless not abandon our efforts to reach a feasible accord by the end of this year.

The Secretary-General has highlighted the linkage between security and development. The commitments he outlines are designed to advance the realization of the Millennium Development Goals, which, if achieved by 2015, would mark a genuine turn of the tide in our common struggle against poverty and disease. The comprehensive package agreed at the G-8 Gleneagles summit in July is an important milestone in helping Africa to eradicate extreme poverty, combat AIDS and malaria, and ensure that every child receives a primary education. We must now make sure that what was agreed at Gleneagles, including a doubling of aid by 2010 and the writing off of billions of dollars in debt, will be delivered.

I would also like to highlight the necessity of achieving gender equality, which includes universal access to reproductive health information and services by 2015. That was the central goal of the agreements that were reached at the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994. Our

countries must strengthen girls' access to both primary and secondary education so that they become less subject to early forced marriages and economic exploitation. Girls must be made safe from genital mutilation. Girls and women must be guaranteed sexual and reproductive rights and protection against HIV/AIDS and other diseases. There is no excuse for half a million women dying each year of pregnancy-related causes that are entirely preventable.

The need for continued development concerns almost all regions in the world, including Eastern Europe, which has experienced momentous changes since the fall of the iron curtain in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Thirteen years ago, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) established an office in Latvia to facilitate the country's development and improve people's lives. Its mandate in Latvia will conclude at the end of this year, and I take this opportunity to express Latvia's gratitude for the invaluable assistance that UNDP has provided to my country over these 13 years.

Today, Latvia, as a full State member of the European Union, has become a net contributor of aid for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. We know that, without the promotion of good governance at all levels, sound macroeconomic policies and a concerted fight against corruption, the Goals will not be reached. Latvia stands ready to share its experience of transition to democratic rule and a free market economy, as it has done and will continue to do with countries in transition in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. We welcome the initiative of establishing a democracy fund to assist all committed countries in their efforts to consolidate democratic political systems.

Recognizing the opportunities that derive from the use of modern technologies in the field of information and communications, Latvia has been actively involved in the preparations for the World Summit on the Information Society, which will be held in Tunis this November. We hope that the Summit will provide unprecedented opportunities for strengthening cooperation among Governments, civil society and the private sector in promoting the use of information and communication technologies and generating knowledge societies.

A major step forward is our unequivocal condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. My own country, Latvia, regained its freedom through peaceful and non-violent means. We triumphed due to our firm belief in historical justice, along with a great deal of persistence, patience and hope.

Latvia welcomes the Secretary-General's counter-terrorism strategy. We need to arrive at a comprehensive convention on international terrorism, which would provide a legal framework for international cooperation in combating that modern-day scourge of humanity. The war against terrorism will be won only if it is fought while respecting basic human rights and remembering humanistic ethics.

I express my profound disappointment that we could not achieve any consensus on disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Progress in that area is more urgently needed than ever. I therefore encourage every United Nations Member State to act responsibly and in good faith in the pursuit of those goals.

Since the previous session of the General Assembly a year ago, the world has experienced natural disasters of an unprecedented scale of destruction. We have just had Hurricane Katrina, and are still getting over the terrible tsunami last year in South-East Asia. The hard lessons of those crises must be learned in order to prepare for future emergencies. While there is nothing we can do to prevent earthquakes and tsunamis, scientists have warned us for years that our continued dependence on and increasing consumption of fossil fuels is generating greenhouse gas emissions that are causing disruptive climate changes. Unless we diversify our sources of energy, we can expect to see more devastating hurricanes and floods in some parts of the world, along with drought and desertification in others.

The challenges that our nations face are formidable, and we will be able to overcome them only by working together. As we prepare to implement the decisions we have made at this gathering, I wish us all the foresight and the courage to uphold the higher interest of the common good over narrow, short-term, local concerns. The future of our peoples depends on us.

The meeting rose at 6.50 p.m.

United Nations A/60/PV.13

General Assembly
Sixtieth session

Official Records

13th plenary meeting
Monday, 19 September 2005, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Eliasson ..... (Sweden)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Address by Mr. Pierre Nkurunziza, President of the Republic of Burundi

The President: The Assembly will hear an address by the President of the Republic of Burundi.

Mr. Pierre Nkurunziza, President of the Republic of Burundi, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Pierre Nkurunziza, President of the Republic of Burundi, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Nkurunziza (*spoke in French*): It is a distinct honour to address this Assembly on the occasion of the sixtieth regular session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, an important milestone in the life of our Organization. We would like to take this opportunity to express our warm congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, for the skill and dynamism he has displayed in leading our Organization. We would also like to pay tribute to his dedication to the cause of peace and to the interest he has always paid to the people of Burundi during their difficult times. Allow us also at this memorable time to express our profound gratitude to the Security Council of the United Nations for the resolute will it has displayed in accompanying the people of Burundi step by step in their search for peace.

Our country has just entered an essential phase in its history. In political terms, after more than ten years of war and a lengthy period of transition, the main protagonists in the conflict have agreed to bury the hatchet. Free, pluralist, fair and transparent elections were the culmination of this long process. Indeed, it was at the end of a genuine electoral marathon, involving local, legislative, senatorial and presidential elections, that the people of Burundi overwhelmingly chose the programme and candidates of my party, the CNDD-FDD (Conseil National pour la Défense de la Démocratie, Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie), in calm and in dignity. This was an indisputable and undisputed victory recognized and acknowledged by all of the many foreign observers. The political parties have also accepted the verdict of the ballot boxes.

In order to enable every opportunity for national harmony and establish democracy once again, we have just set up a Government of broad national union consisting of all the elements of the Burundi people, with its political, social, ethnic and regional diversity, a Government where women hold the significant position they deserve.

We are especially pleased to note the genuine social and mental change represented by the entry of Burundian women into the political sphere. Today, women hold 35 per cent of posts in the executive branch. Their presence is notable in all State institutions. For the first time in my country's history,

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of the Republic is held by a woman. Women head seven of the 20 ministries, including in such important posts as justice, foreign relations and planning. Lastly, many women are working in provincial and communal administrations.

Our Government cherishes the hope that this contribution of women's talents to managing the affairs of State will help to strengthen democracy by giving it a warmer, more thoughtful and peaceful image.

We are also pleased that the democratic spirit of cohesion and unity in diversity which has breathed new life into the political scene is also being felt in the institutions of defence and security. Indeed, yesterday's antagonists — the former Burundian armed forces and the armed groups arrayed against them — have been merged into new forces, known as the National Defence Force and the National Police of Burundi, in which all the country's players are represented. That fact is rare enough to warrant highlighting.

All of those profound changes have been made possible by the synergy between the concern of the international community, the courage and maturity of the Burundian people, and the willingness to compromise of the political class. We express our warmest thanks to all the international partners that accompanied us on our long road to peace. In particular, we would single out the regional initiative, the United Nations Operation in Burundi, mediators Mwalimu Julius Nyerere and President Mandela, facilitator Jacob Zuma, the European Union, the United States of America, the African Union and many friendly countries, especially those that contributed troops to the peacekeeping force as well as financial logistic means.

Peace in our country, like the lasting success of our democratic experience, is closely linked to the stability of the regional environment. We therefore welcome the efforts to restore peace, stability and sustainable development in the Great Lakes region. We are closely following and actively participating in the preparations for the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, now being organized under United Nations and African Union auspices, with the support of the region's Group of Friends.

We are one with our world village. Nothing that occurs there does not touch us. Threats to peace and security sneer at borders. We call today for an urgent partnership to combat terrorism. In that context, the general convention on international terrorism, once concluded, will be an innovative legal instrument in addressing issues that have yet to be regulated.

We also need to stem the phenomenon of drug trafficking, which — with its many corollaries, including child labour, the sex industry and illegal migration — is transforming human beings into twenty-first century commodities.

Combating terrorism must include promoting a culture of peace. It would thus be useful to use the International Decade for the Culture of Peace to build the defences of peace in the minds of men and women, particularly through education, the media, faith-based organizations and cultural programmes aimed at children.

Terrorism is also a denial of human rights. We therefore welcome the decision to create the human rights council to promote respect for those rights. The council will allow us to end the partisan bickering prevalent in the Commission on Human Rights.

As to the reform of the Security Council and other United Nations organs, our Government supports the position of the African Union.

With respect to good governance, our Government is committed to taking appropriate measures to establish good governance in all its aspects. We refer in particular to capacity-building, the mobilization of domestic resources and the implementation of strategies to combat corruption, fraud and embezzlement. We will soon be unveiling a new law and anti-corruption squad.

We are committed to fighting impunity, for we want to strive for impartial justice, not only by building our capacities in that sphere, but also by reforming the sectors involved in that issue. In that context, we request in particular the international community's assistance in the urgent establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission.

In the socio-economic field, we hope that the establishment of new elected, democratic institutions will lay the groundwork for robust legitimacy and effectiveness in our reconstruction and socio-economic development strategies. We wish to prioritize the rehabilitation of social and economic infrastructure destroyed during the war and the reintegration of expatriates, internally displaced persons, demobilized soldiers and war victims.

We also intend to attach high priority to education. Thus, when we came to power, we decided to provide free primary schooling to all children by the beginning of the 2005-2006 school year. That priority goal for education requires the development and implementation of ambitious and urgent programmes to train qualified teachers, rebuild schools and obtain new educational materials.

For the period 2006-2008, we are planning for the construction of at least one primary school for each census area, totalling some 350 primary schools. That will involve the construction of 800 classrooms in 2006, the recruitment of 2,000 new teachers and the acquisition of teaching materials at an estimated cost of $15 million. In that same context, we will prioritize professional training, particularly in the agricultural, paramedical, technical and trade fields, in order to hasten the country's reconstruction. By 2008, we expect to build in each province a technical secondary school with several departments and a capacity of at least 1,000 pupils.

Increased financial resources will be necessary and we know that we can count on the assistance of the international community. In that regard, we support the innovative proposal of the French Government to find new sources of development financing by imposing a levy on air tickets.

Much remains to be done in the area of health. Our Government has undertaken to develop a policy to make significant improvements in universal access to health care, and to implement the national strategic plan to combat HIV/AIDS, an essential component of which is capacity-building in HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment.

The achievements of my country, particularly in the political and security fields, are important steps in the right direction. Nevertheless, they are only the start of a process that must be consolidated.

In particular, we will have to resume activities to combat poverty and re-establish economic growth, two essential measures that will allow our people to reap the dividends of peace.

The support of the entire population for the peace process and the programme for economic growth is essential. But how can the people feel that the new policy includes them if their living conditions are not rapidly improved? That is why the support of the international community in this difficult period is of supreme importance. We make an urgent appeal to the international community to ensure that the level and quality of their commitments will respond to the insistent expectations of our population and to the new democratic changes.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Burundi for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Pierre Nkurunziza, President of the Republic of Burundi, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Marc Ravalomanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Madagascar.

Mr. Marc Ravalomanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Madagascar, His Excellency Mr. Marc Ravalomanana, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ravalomanana (*spoke in French*): No one here took part in the first General Assembly in 1945. We can only imagine how at the end of the Second World War men and women full of hope were prompted by a firm resolve to change and make the world better. They were right. The shortcomings and weaknesses of our Organization should not in any way detract from the leading role of the United Nations in the world.

Do we today share the same spirit that inspired our predecessors? At the end of this General Assembly will we feel that we have improved the world?

We welcome the draft outcome document. We also welcome recent resolutions adopted by the Security Council on counter-terrorism and conflict prevention, particularly in Africa. We support the early establishment of a human rights council so as to promote democracy.

However, the results of the summit meeting do not fully correspond with Africa's aspirations. What is lacking is that long-hoped-for impetus that would enable every Member State to express its views, give hope to our peoples, preserve the balance of nature and enable us to ensure the futures of all the world's children. We need to further strengthen our efforts by trying fresh approaches.

First of all, it is high time to strengthen the role of the General Assembly. It is also time for Africa to be better represented within United Nations bodies, and in particular on the Security Council. That is a matter of justice, but it is also a necessity for the development of our continent. Having Africa's voice heard on the international level and allowing it to share in responsibilities on a global level are marks of concern and respect for our States and our peoples. Let us put an end to the exclusion of the African continent. We want to make our full and complete contribution to debates and decision-making on issues that concern how our world works.

The discussions in recent months have focused on institutional reform at the United Nations. That is a very important question. It is also important for Africa. But we would ask you to expand the discussion so as to properly define the role that the Organization should play in world development. The United Nations should be more than just a crisis management body — a body that addresses poverty, disasters and emergencies. Let us convert it into a body that inspires us with hope. Let us work together for development, justice and equity.

The sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations should mark the beginning of a new era in which we will have the opportunity to build a more prosperous, more just, more democratic and more environmentally aware world — a world that is sounder, healthier, more responsible and more united.

We need to work out strategies and plans that arouse enthusiasm among nations and attract the fervent hopes of our peoples. We will only change the world if we can secure the support of our populations.

The United Nations must devise and adopt the necessary measures to establish a more balanced world. All the crises, the wars, the questions of security and terrorism, the world's epidemics — all of those have concrete causes.

The Secretary-General rightly quoted one of the United Nations purposes from the preamble to the Charter: "to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom". Our peoples want to have real opportunities. Quite rightly, they call for the favourable conditions that will allow them to take advantage of those opportunities.

Our Organization is 60 years old. Much has been achieved in decolonization and peacekeeping, for instance. Five years ago we defined the Millennium Development Goals. Now we must go still further. Let us devise a genuine global strategy for development, a strategic partnership with a clear-cut vision and more ambitious goals.

As regards Africa, what is lacking is a clear vision of its future. It can be seen that Africa is still a poor continent. Nonetheless, Africa has the potential to be rich. The previous General Assembly provided me with an opportunity to propose a "Marshall Plan for Africa". The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom made the same proposal and the President of the World Bank, Mr. Paul Wolfowitz, has also spoken of a plan of action for Africa. Let us ask other donors to join in this initiative.

The Marshall Plan for Africa should cover much more than a call to cancel debt and increase financial support. It should take into account Africa's potential and the right steps that are needed to realize it. It should build a positive image of our continent and determine the role that it could play in economic, political, social and cultural spheres.

Globalization highlights the economic dimension of international relations. However, we need to invest more in the social dimension of development by enhancing the role of the Economic and Social Council so as to meet the legitimate aspirations of our peoples.

The future of Africa lies, of course, with its children. The plan for Africa should describe how we can approve the transfer of knowledge and how we can ensure access for young Africans to the world's knowledge and expertise, so that the intellectual potential of millions of people will not be wasted.

We need to increase literacy levels. We also need an educational system that meets international standards of quality and effectiveness — a system that will foster creativity and help our peoples to realize their dreams, a system that will optimize our countries'

human resources so as to enable us to play an important role in the world economy; a system which will help to close the digital divide among nations.

Saving African children also means feeding them. In that respect, overcoming hunger in Africa is an urgent challenge, as millions of people will be affected by this crisis.

Madagascar, as a new member of the Southern African Development Community, urges the General Assembly to make that crisis its highest priority. We must act rapidly and with resolve.

Let us also improve the situation of women. They deserve to play a more significant role in civil society and in the economic and political arena.

I have personally been asked by the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) project to share their concerns with you. Indeed, one of the most burdensome daily chores of African women is providing a family with water. Access to drinking water for all frees women from servitude and thus preserves their dignity. Moreover, the issue of water management is inseparable from those of sanitation and hygiene. Water is a source of life and a great economic asset. The development of hydroelectric energy is one solution to Africa's energy deficit. Let us not forget that rational water management will enable us to achieve food self-sufficiency.

Such a Marshall Plan should include the protection and development of natural resources, which are crucial to our continent. To that end, we have a vision, which we call "Madagascar, naturally".

Two years ago in Durban, I announced our decision to triple the extent of protected areas in the country so as to ensure the preservation of our rich and unique biodiversity. We took the decision to earmark 8 per cent of funds stemming from the cancellation of external debt for the funding of our protected-area system.

The African continent already is involved in the preservation of natural resources for the world and will increase its efforts in that area.

Let us focus on agribusiness by creating more opportunities for processing our natural products and thus enhancing the value-added that they bring to our countries. This is the approach that Madagascar is taking now, with the support of donors. Let us foster initiatives to establish a fair and equitable trading regime among nations, such as the reduction of trade barriers.

In short, such a Marshall Plan should make it clear that the African continent can prosper by shouldering its responsibilities. We need to speak more of our assets than of our weaknesses. We need to speak of our potential rather than our lack of resources. The world wants to invest in our potential. Let us find a fresh approach. Let us create a new image, a new, clear vision for Africa. It is only through such a vision, along with a genuine global strategy for development, that the Millennium Development Goals can be achieved.

Such an approach must incorporate the various international and bilateral programmes and projects whose differing structures, objectives and content make them complicated to manage and hinder the identification of possible synergies. But it is incumbent on us to ensure the effective coordination of development and thus adopt the concept of country ownership. We in Madagascar have taken the initiative of setting up national programmes in which all donors' projects are incorporated.

The world must heed the needs of Africa, but Africa must also face up to its responsibilities by strengthening democracy, good governance and the rule of law.

The discussions on the role and the structure of the United Nations which have taken place in the context of the sixtieth anniversary offer us an exceptional opportunity. Let us create more equitable structures that are better suited to today's needs and realities. Let us draw inspiration from the spirit of the founding fathers of our Organization.

Let us be nations united in spirit, with a global vision and strategy of development for a world that is not only more dynamic but also more balanced, more equitable and more responsible. Let us work towards that end.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Madagascar for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Marc Ravalomanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Emile Lahoud, President of the Lebanese Republic

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Lebanese Republic.

Mr. Emile Lahoud, President of the Lebanese Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Emile Lahoud, President of the Lebanese Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Lahoud: Mr. President, first of all, I would like to congratulate you on your election as President of this session of the General Assembly and to thank your predecessor, Mr. Ping, for all his efforts during his tenure. I would like also to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for all his endeavours in seeking the preservation of this great institution's integrity as well as world peace.

This year's session of the General Assembly comes days after a landmark meeting of world leaders at which they adopted a blueprint that aims to increase the efficiency of the United Nations in the prosecution of human rights abuses and in the preservation of world peace and security. Moreover, that instrument calls on all to move forward with a much-needed, comprehensive programme of reforms at the United Nations, including in the Security Council.

This clearly demonstrates our faith in the primacy of the role of the United Nations in the preservation of world peace, as the embodiment of our collective desire and will, and as the legitimate body for crisis resolution within the framework of every individual State's sovereignty.

Truly, the only way out of this dangerous impasse is a return to a multipolar world order, based on the rule of international law and justice and on respect for every nation's sovereignty. Moreover, such a wise approach should be complemented by serious and concerted efforts to fight poverty and oppression and, consequently, the root causes of terror.

The core values of a democratic and just world are best served by enhancing the capabilities of the United Nations and its instruments, and by reinforcing in-house democratic values. This institution should remain the primary defender of such human values as freedom, justice and peace.

The advances in telecommunications and information technologies, signature traits of globalization, have led to a withering of geographical boundaries, along with a strengthening of multinational corporations, and hence the need for a new approach to tackling our world's problems in international relations. The "crumbs" from the rich nations have become insufficient to satisfy the needs of a third world seeking to extract itself from backwardness and to eradicate poverty and disease. Those ailments have spread beyond the boundaries of the great development divide and serve as a stern wake-up call and a ticking bomb for us all to heed.

That is why it is imperative to call for a serious and urgent dialogue between North and South, for rapid and eased transfer of technological advances and capital, and for bolstering the development of those nations that seek modernity. Moreover, it is crucial to encourage interaction and cooperation between developing States through such forums as the summit that was held in Brasilia last May, where Arab nations met the nations of South America. Lebanon looks forward to the follow-up meetings of the Brasilia summit, considering the importance of cooperation between those two important geographic blocs.

At this juncture, it is logical to ask whether extremism, terrorism and wanton violence against innocent civilians are the by-products of the environment of seclusion and deprivation. In view of the rapid spread of terrorism, we feel that the approach to countering the plague of terrorism remains superficial and unable to tackle the root causes of the plague.

Having suffered the awful consequences of that plague, Lebanon was always a bellwether in condemning all terrorist acts around the world. That is because few nations have so endured and continue to endure the consequences of that evil. That is why we know that an effective anti-terror campaign requires an environment of constructive cooperation worldwide, remote from politically motivated campaigns of vilification, and as a platform for a clear definition of terrorism, remote from the wilful or unintended conflation of the inalienable right of people to fight occupation and acts of wanton terror.

Therefore, and in order to conclusively win the war on terror, the security approach should be complemented by mid- and long-term approaches aimed at resolving political crises in order to deprive the terrorists of all legitimacy. That is why tackling the problems of oppression and occupation, along with bolstering development, education and the attainment of a better life, will surely lead to shrinking the human pool that feeds extremism.

For decades now, the Middle East has witnessed conflicts and unresolved disputes and, as a consequence, has been subject to the festering wounds of terrorism. Needless to say, the core of the problem remains the fact that Arab lands are still under occupation in spite of the many resolutions of international legitimacy, many adopted in this very edifice, calling for an end to occupation.

The immediate implementation of those resolutions, as well as General Assembly resolution 194 (III) — which affirms the right of return of the Palestinian refugees to their lands confiscated by Israel and bars the resettlement of the uprooted Palestinians in their host countries — remains the only way to defuse and to dry up the wells of extremism. That will pave the way to a comprehensive, just and peaceful settlement in our region, as foreseen in the 1991 Madrid peace summit and the implementation of the land-for-peace principle.

Those principles of peace were confirmed as a strategic choice by all Arab leaders during the Beirut Arab summit of 2002. Sadly, the initiative has yet to be seized upon to resolve regional conflicts and to achieve a final and peaceful settlement in the Middle East.

Awaiting the historic resolution of the conflict, Lebanon commends the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East for all that it does, and calls upon the international community to bolster its capabilities in order to alleviate the hardships of the Palestinian refugees in their places of "temporary" residence.

The daily Israeli violations of Lebanon's territorial integrity and aggressions against the people of South Lebanon have made that important part of my country yet another point of tension in the Middle East. Israel's violation of the Blue Line and its continuing occupation of parts of my country, along with the imprisonment of scores of our citizens without any recourse to due process, are in clear violation of international law, to say nothing of the lethal hardships faced by our citizens in the freed areas of South Lebanon due to the thousands of land mines planted by Israel during its two-decade occupation of South Lebanon.

My country continues to adhere to a comprehensive and just peace settlement, to the principle of non-aggression, and to respect for human rights, and yearns for the implementation of all international resolutions towards those ends. In the meantime, we cannot but value the role played by the United Nations in South Lebanon through the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) — a role that has been extended to and benefited Lebanon for almost three decades. Our clinging to the UNIFIL presence emanates from our commitment to peace and security, pending a final resolution of the conflicts in the region.

Here, I would like to avail myself of the opportunity to salute the UNIFIL forces active in South Lebanon, to thank them for their sacrifices, and to bow in memory of the fallen peacekeepers.

Lebanon has long endured Israel's wars and occupation, despite a Security Council resolution calling for the immediate cessation of the occupation. Alas, Israel ignored that resolution for over two decades. That gave birth to a staunchly national movement of resistance and defence of Lebanon's territorial integrity, as guaranteed by the Charter of the United Nations under the right to fight occupation.

Despite the persistence of all the aforementioned conditions of occupation, violations and aggressions, and due to Lebanon's adherence to all resolutions of international legitimacy — an adherence based on a clear understanding of the world community's demands — the Government of Lebanon launched an internal dialogue between all Lebanese groups in order to maintain our unity, security and stability, and to reinforce our internal and international positions. We look forward to maintaining that rapport with the world community in order to achieve those noble goals.

Since the historic reconciliation at Taef, Lebanon has enjoyed over a decade of stability and tranquillity, quickly recapturing its regional pre-eminence and its pioneering role as a land of religious tolerance — an example to follow in the dialogue of civilizations. Moreover, Lebanon has enjoyed an unprecedented level of economic revitalization and has been able to

forge iron-clad unity in its armed forces and civil institutions.

However, Lebanon has recently gone through some horrific and fateful events, one of which — the assassination of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri — constitutes the hardest blow in its modern history. That assassination caused great grief for our nation, and the repercussions were felt throughout the world. We look forward to the timely and prompt disclosure of the International Inquiry Commission's results of the investigation into that heinous act, and we thank the Security Council for consenting to Lebanon's request to appoint such a Commission.

Moreover, Lebanon appreciates the great efforts undertaken by the Inquiry Commission in its search for the truth, and will afford the Commission all the support that it needs in order for us to prosecute the culprits to the full extent of the law. That underlines the commitment of Lebanon and of the world community in the fight against terrorism.

Despite the abominable assassination of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and the ensuing national malaise, we were able to conduct exemplary parliamentary elections, which have been heralded by most observers as yet another landmark in the democratic history of Lebanon.

United Nations and international monitoring officials testified that those elections were held in accordance with the highest standards. Consequently, a Government of national unity has been formed, which has taken upon itself the task of immediately tackling Lebanon's internal and external affairs, within the framework of a serious dialogue aimed at achieving a national consensus and the preservation of what we all desire, namely, Lebanon's stability and national unity.

The new Lebanese Government is determined to undertake a comprehensive plan of reform that will encompass all political, administrative and economic aspects, and as a first step it has established a much-needed consultative national body to formulate a new electoral law that will live up to the recommendations of the European Union's delegated commission.

Moreover, the Lebanese Government looks forward to the valuable support of the United Nations, and conveys the gratitude of the people of Lebanon. Finally, we commend the precise follow-up provided by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund for the rebuilding of a solid national economy.

From this rostrum, we set forth Lebanon's struggle for freedom, justice and the rule of law. It has been Lebanon's fate to walk this path in a region of festering, decades-long conflicts and disputes. As such, it has ended up paying an exorbitant price in wars, occupations and assassinations. But Lebanon has been relentless in its devotion to what is good and right, and has always been able to defeat the forces of sedition and destruction.

Today, we owe our moment of triumph to our perseverance and to the international community's commitment to Lebanon. We ask that you take our hand, once again, as we cross the threshold from fear and war to hope and peace.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Lebanese Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Emile Lahoud, President of the Lebanese Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Item 9 of the provisional agenda (*continued*)

General debate

Address by The Honourable Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius.

The Honourable Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency The Honourable Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Ramgoolam (Mauritius): I should like, on behalf of my delegation and of the Government and the people of the Republic of Mauritius, to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. We are confident that

you will be able to discharge the responsibilities entrusted to you. I want to assure you, as I did during our meeting this morning, of my delegation's fullest cooperation during your tenure of office.

I would also like to convey my delegation's gratitude and appreciation to Mr. Jean Ping of Gabon for the outstanding manner in which he conducted the affairs of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. As Africans, we are proud of his exemplary stewardship.

My delegation also wishes to express its appreciation for the tireless and dedicated efforts of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, in leading the Organization in these challenging times.

The very first words of the United Nations Charter — "We the peoples of the United Nations" — are of overwhelming significance. They imply that people should be the primary beneficiaries of every resolution that we adopt and every programme that we launch. As we engage in this debate, we should ask ourselves whether we have, indeed, put the peoples at the centre of all of our deliberations and activities. Have we done enough to ensure that ordinary people, men and women, young and old, benefit from all our initiatives and actions, collective as well as individual?

Last Friday, by adopting the outcome document, leaders of the world renewed their pledge to save humanity from the scourge of war, fear, disease, famine and poverty. The citizens of the world were witness to the sober promises we made in it. They now wait, in earnest, to see concrete results. We are therefore required to muster the collective political will to mobilize the necessary resources to fulfil those pledges.

The wealthy and powerful North should assist the less fortunate countries, which require assistance to help propel them into the orbit of irreversible sustainable social and economic growth. For its part, the South must devote energy and show creativity as it engages in a common effort to attain social development and human security.

The spirit of teamwork and partnership which resulted in the successful outcome of the United Nations world summit should allow us to adopt a fresh mindset that places the interests, security and welfare of our peoples at the centre of our socio-economic policies. That cannot be done without promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In our efforts to pursue people-centred development, we must put a premium on tackling those national and transnational issues that have a direct impact on people's welfare. Lifting peoples out of abject poverty and endowing them with appropriate means to lead productive lives is the best guarantee for long-term sustained social stability, which, in turn, will ensure prosperity and international peace. Poverty reduction and eradication must therefore remain at the core of all development efforts towards a just and equitable order.

In keeping with our democratic tradition, just three months ago, the people of my country voted, overwhelmingly, for a change of Government. Immediately upon assuming office, my Government has formulated development strategies based on the premise that economic and social policies must subserve the primacy of the people, in particular the poor. In fact, the fundamental principle of my Government's policy is putting the people first. My Government believes that the fullest possible participation of the people in the development process is the best guarantee for the success of any growth strategy.

The first set of social decisions taken by my Government, with that in mind, has been to expand the welfare State to cover free transportation for students and the elderly as well as to restore old-age pensions for all citizens. My Government's overriding objective is ultimately to make the economy work for the people, not to make the people work for the economy.

My delegation believes that assisting developing countries through increased official development assistance (ODA) is crucial; but it is only a palliative, not a remedy. Aid without trade would be not only unsustainable but, indeed, self-defeating. Trade is, and will always remain, the recognized engine of economic growth and development. Developing countries continue to face impediments in their efforts to attain sustained economic growth. Tariff and non-tariff barriers in developed countries, combined with the non-implementation of commitments undertaken with respect to development financing and debt alleviation for developing countries, further aggravate the situation. We call on the international community to demonstrate the political will necessary to ensure that

the Doha development round truly takes into account those concerns so as to achieve a fair and equitable global trading system for the benefits of our people.

My delegation welcomes the particular attention given by the world summit to the special needs of Africa. While many countries throughout the world have made significant progress in lifting their people out of poverty, for many others — mainly in sub-Saharan Africa — poverty, hunger, illiteracy, infectious diseases and the incidence of HIV/AIDS, unemployment and environmental degradation continue to take a heavy toll. My delegation therefore appreciates the resolve of the international community to address those issues and emphasizes the need for timely implementation of the relevant measures.

Despite significant efforts that have resulted in peace in several parts of Africa, the continent continues to suffer from violent conflicts and humanitarian crises. The plight of displaced people — especially women and children — in those conflict situations and in refugee camps needs to be urgently addressed. My delegation wishes to underscore the importance of enhanced measures to protect vulnerable groups, especially women and children, during and after armed conflicts.

In our own region, Mauritius continues to remain actively engaged in the reconciliation process in the Comoros. We are presently coordinating the preparations to host a donor round table for the Comoros later this year. The importance of the meeting cannot be overstated. We urge the donor community to contribute to this process for the benefit of the people of the Comoros.

The situation in the Middle East is seeing some tangible progress. We welcome the process of Israeli disengagement from Gaza and the northern West Bank, and we commend the efforts of the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, to find a peaceful and lasting solution to the conflict. We urge both the Israeli and the Palestinian peoples to continue the much-needed confidence-building measures so as to achieve a just and lasting peace.

With regard to Iraq, where innocent civilians are falling victim to violence on a daily basis, it is imperative that necessary support be provided to ensure the creation of an environment in which the Iraqi people can live in peace and security.

I spoke extensively on terrorism in the statement I made on 15 September 2005 during the High-level Plenary Meeting. I wish to reaffirm my country's commitment to fully cooperate with the international community to fight the scourge of terrorism, which has a direct and indirect effect on the lives of ordinary and innocent people.

At a time when there is a global consensus regarding the need to build a more secure world, it is a matter of the greatest regret that the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons failed to achieve a conclusive outcome. The proliferation of nuclear weapons poses a grave risk of fissile material falling into the wrong hands. That eventuality is too horrendous to contemplate. The devastation that could be caused by so-called low-yield nuclear weapons is unimaginable.

Mauritius advocates the eventual complete elimination of all nuclear weapons on the basis of a comprehensive and non-discriminatory disarmament regime. To demonstrate once again its full commitment to non-proliferation and to international peace and security, Mauritius recently signed the Additional Protocol of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Mauritius welcomes the agreement reached in June 2005 in New York on a politically binding international instrument on the tracing of small arms and light weapons, which will no doubt assist in combating the illicit trade in such weapons. That represents a significant step in ensuring that our peoples live in a safer world.

As regards reform of the Security Council, I wish to refer to my statement on 15 September 2005 outlining the position of Mauritius on that issue. We have a unique opportunity for substantial reform; it must not be squandered. It is imperative that Africa and India, the world's largest democracies, should find their rightful place in such reform. A reformed Security Council should reflect the present geopolitical realities to meet the aspirations of all our peoples.

The United Nations is a vital forum in which States, large and small, wealthy and less fortunate, can have their voices heard. It also provides a framework for collective action on the basis of consensus partnership and mutual understanding. I wish to reiterate the appeal I made, as Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States, to our friends and partners at the

special session on financing for development to continue to assist the small island developing States in their sustainable development efforts through the proper and effective implementation of the Mauritius Strategy.

Regional cooperation is an important means for developing and strengthening the economies of developing countries. To that end, we have made modest but encouraging progress with respect to regional integration. Mauritius pursues an active policy of integration through subregional organizations such as the Southern African Development Community, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, the Indian Ocean Commission and the Indian Ocean Rim-Association for Regional Cooperation. While relations with our traditional development and trade partners continue to feature prominently in the foreign policy of Mauritius, we intend to take vigorous steps towards the development of strategic partnerships with member States of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, as well as with Latin American countries.

Allow me to reiterate before the Assembly our legitimate sovereignty claim over the Chagos Archipelago, including the island of Diego Garcia, which was detached by the United Kingdom from the territory of Mauritius prior to our independence, in violation of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) of 1960 and resolution 2066 (XX) of 1965. The people of the Chagos Archipelago, who were evicted from the islands, are still struggling for their right to return to their birthplace. We reiterate our call to the United Kingdom to pursue discussions with us for an early settlement of this issue. Likewise, we appeal to the French Government to expedite the process of resolving the issue of the sovereignty of Tromelin through dialogue in the spirit of friendship and trust that has always characterized our relationship.

(*spoke in French*)

Here, I should like to say a few words in French to show my country's attachment to and respect for cultures and languages in all their diversity. Some of those languages, including French, have been bequeathed to us by history.

People have struggled throughout history to live better, but humankind continues to suffer. That remains true, unfortunately, for the developing countries, and those of the African continent in particular. The dawn of the third millennium has seen the expansion of assistance projects, including the Millennium Development Goals, to improve the fate of the weak and impoverished. We are committed to reducing extreme poverty and hunger by 2015.

The International Organization of la Francophonie, as announced in November 2004 at its tenth summit in Ouagadougou, is involved in that global struggle. We need to reinvent ourselves, get off the beaten track, and find new ways to attain our objectives as soon as possible. In that respect, we welcome the contribution of the French-speaking family in that joint action.

(*spoke in English*)

From this very rostrum 37 years ago, when Mauritius acceded to United Nations membership in 1968, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, then Prime Minister and father of the Mauritian nation, firmly advocated a secure, stable and just world:

> "[M]en of goodwill are constantly trying to find a formula by which the underprivileged can banish inequality and fear and aspire to a place in the sun." (*A/PV.1643*, para. 100)

Today, those aspirations are more valid than ever as the comity of nations engages in the quest for freedom from want, freedom from fear and the freedom to live in dignity. Providing mankind with those freedoms remains the primary goal of the United Nations.

In that spirit, I wish to announce that my Government has made a commitment in the Clinton Global Initiative to organizing an international conference on poverty and development, which will be results-oriented.

Today, as we celebrate the sixtieth year of its existence, let us strive to become what we were always meant to be — a truly representative body of "We the peoples of the United Nations", acting in defence of their welfare and the advancement of their interests above all else. That must remain our unflinching objective, and Mauritius pledges to fully play its part in that noble endeavour.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by The Honourable Ralph E. Gonsalves, Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, Planning, Economic Development, Labour, Information, Grenadines and Legal Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, Planning, Economic Development, Labour, Information, Grenadines and Legal Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

The Honourable Ralph E. Gonsalves, Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, Planning, Economic Development, Labour, Information, Grenadines and Legal Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency The Honourable Ralph E. Gonsalves, Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, Planning, Economic Development, Labour, Information, Grenadines and Legal Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Gonsalves (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): The sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations coincides with the commemoration of my country's twenty-fifth year of independence. The preamble to the Constitution of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines reaffirms that our nation is founded on the belief in the supremacy of God and the freedom and dignity of man. Our national motto, *Pax et justitia* — Peace and justice — symbolizes both our reality and our dream. The universal ideals which inspired the founding fathers of the United Nations are those which prompted the lofty proclamations in my nation's Constitution. The United Nations Charter taught us a truth, as though engraved on a tablet of stone, that while some sleep to dream, we must dream to change the world for the better.

We in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines accept unequivocally the fulcrum around which the outcome document of the High-level Plenary Meeting revolves, namely, to create a more peaceful, prosperous and democratic world, and to undertake concrete measures to continue finding ways to implement the conclusions of the Millennium Summit and other major United Nations gatherings so as to provide multilateral solutions to the problems which touch and concern development, peace and collective security, human rights and the rule of law, and the strengthening of the United Nations.

Yet the outcome document, though certainly a codified and presumably consensual package, falls short of what is truly demanded by these extraordinary, challenging times in the first decade of the twenty-first century. The larger and more powerful nations are gripped by an unreasonable fear which, in the process, constrains them from being reasonably fair. Less powerful nation-States and those which are small and weak internationally often beat their collective chests with an unbecoming self-righteous purity that restrains them from knowing or understanding what impurity is, even within themselves.

So, an unwholesome stand-off results. Meanwhile, around us all, there is a carnival of misery, a festival of guns. A Caribbean poet laureate tells us that the faces of men and women are strained and anxious. Many, if not most persons, become sceptical — nay, cynical — of the grand efforts of the world's leaders. They search instead for an amazing grace which makes the blind to see and the wretched to be saved. Along the way, the majesty of faith becomes metamorphosed, in too many of the world's inhabitants, into a believer's extremism. Man's reason cannot quite fathom, this side of eternity, the evil which extremism breeds. That is an enduring conundrum of our times which, in this earthly city, we, amidst all our limitations and weaknesses, must seek to address appropriately with all our possibilities and strengths, but without the baggage of economic, military or cultural imperialism.

Economic imperialism muzzles the mouth with the food that it eats to live and thus builds resentment in that very mouth that eats, and even more so among those who receive no food to eat. Military imperialism begets armed resistance in which a triumph is but a pause in its impermanence. Cultural imperialism distorts the mind, but in that very distortion the seed of its rejection germinates, blossoms and bears a bitter and even chauvinistic fruit. The presumed solutions of the powerful have been shown, historically, to be mirages. Surely, there must be a better way. Nelson Mandela has taught us that. Together, we are the world; we are the future. But of all time, only the future is

ours to desecrate; the present is the past, and the past is our fathers' mischiefs.

Underlying all of this is a seemingly intractable socio-economic product of modern globalization — the contradiction between, on the one hand, a growing inequality in income distribution globally and, on the other, the increasing commonality of consumption patterns. Modern communications, including the revolution in information technology, have connected the world as never before. Yet, that very enhanced connection breeds, justifiably, a great impatience among those who are most disadvantaged. Economic adjustment has to be made more swiftly. Time is of the essence, but that very swiftness engenders socio-economic dislocation, which poses immense difficulties for political management.

Those profound challenges require a series of measures, including more official development assistance more speedily disbursed, a fair system of international trade, international peace based on tried and tested principles of international law, appropriate reformation of the United Nations and its associate institutions, and a more tolerant and educated population worldwide. But we must set about doing so immediately with conviction, resolution, solidarity and dignity. The alternative is apocalypse now.

No difficulties, no hardships, no crises, can justify terrorism. Terrorism wounds the poor and disadvantaged ever so much. Its barbarism must continue to be resisted by civilized peoples and nations internationally. No space must be given to terrorism.

A small multi-island nation like Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has a bundle of special needs. We are, therefore, encouraged by the collective recognition by all the Member States of the United Nations that special needs and vulnerabilities attend small island developing States. We are heartened, too, by the reaffirmation of the Member States' commitment to address these special needs and vulnerabilities. There are reams of paper commitments in the Mauritius Strategy adopted by the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, in the Barbados Programme of Action and in the outcome document of the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly.

We realize that the just-concluded United Nations High-level Plenary Meeting has undertaken to promote greater international cooperation and partnership for the implementation of the solemn commitments through, among other things, the mobilization of domestic and international resources, the promotion of international trade as an engine for development and increased international financial and technical cooperation.

These splendid commitments and undertakings, like all words, must be made flesh if they are to signify anything. To be sure, heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard will be sweeter in uplifting action. In this regard, I reaffirm, without here repeating, all that I stated in my speech to this body last Friday, 16 September, on the development agenda focused on the Millennium Development Goals and a sustainable condition beyond them for countries like my own. Certainly, a fair resolution to the banana trade impasse in Europe must be fashioned without condemning our poor banana farmers and workers to further penury and misery.

The recent occurrences in Asia, the Caribbean and the southern United States of devastating storms and hurricanes, and in Africa, of terrible droughts, demand a more coordinated and rational approach internationally to issues of climate change, disaster preparedness, and post-disaster rehabilitation. By and large, there have been ad hoc national, as distinct from international, approaches. To the extent that international mechanisms exist for prompt and appropriate relief work, they are clearly inadequate for the tasks at hand.

This is undoubtedly an area in which the United Nations and one or more of its agencies or associate institutions ought to be able to make a significant difference to the well being of real flesh-and-blood people. After all, natural disasters respect no territorial boundaries or power blocs; calamities from nature have a studied ideological neutrality. They are the same sad songs heard from ancient times by emperor, vassals and clown; and in modern times, increasingly by the rich and the poor. But they afflict the poor more disastrously than any other group. This matter demands urgent international attention. The pain and anguish evoked by President George Bush in his most recent speech on the Katrina disaster must surely move to concerted international action even those who stand amid the alien corn.

A sustained, coordinated response is needed if we are to avoid an ignoble "disaster fatigue" that treats a natural disaster in one country as a momentary distraction from normalcy, as television images determine, until the next one arrives. Grenada is a case in point. It was laid waste in September 2004 by Hurricane Ivan, but its recovery effort has been slowed by the focus on the more recent catastrophes from nature in South Asia, Niger and the southern United States. Grenada still cries out for massive international assistance. We must help. There is still an enduring need, even after the television cameras have gone elsewhere. This applies, too, in relation to man-made disasters, such as in Darfur.

The ever-deteriorating state of affairs in our Caribbean Community (CARICOM) neighbour Haiti demonstrates vividly the inherent dangers of meddling with the democratic process. Since I spoke on the issue, more in sadness than in anger, one year ago, the situation has disintegrated. The so-called Government, implanted without any mandate from the people, has neither the political will nor the popular support to undertake the measures necessary to return that poor, traumatized country to some semblance of normalcy. There has been no serious effort at disarming the gangs that roam the towns and countryside and practice mob justice. Political victimization continues apace with the cruel detention and violation of the human rights of former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune, the most glaring example; while, on the other side of the coin, the decision of the Supreme Court to quash the sentences of 15 thugs from the Front for Advancement and Progress in Haiti (FRAPH), convicted of involvement in the 1994 Raboteau massacre, has all the elements of political motivation.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, with its CARICOM partners, is anxious to welcome Haiti back into the organs of our regional body. But it would be a betrayal of all that we hold dear to ignore the interruption of democracy, the abuses of human rights and the breakdown of law and order merely to appease perfidious power. We support the work of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), while believing that the United Nations forces have neither the manpower nor the resources required to perform the miracle that they have been entrusted to conjure.

From time to time, one or more of our traditional friends and allies have shown displeasure at one or more of our decisions in the field of international relations. Some appear not to appreciate the necessity and desirability of small States, such as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, seeking, and oft-times finding, more economic and political space to enhance their capacity to address more efficaciously the harsh winds from the external political economy and to do so in the interest of our people's humanization. No one has anything to fear from us. None of our friends can reasonably ask us to adopt their enemies as our own. It is part of our quest to get adversaries to speak sensibly to one another and resolve their differences, particularly if they are our neighbours. We pick fights with no one; and we do not pick other people's fights.

One of the best and most loyal friends over our country's 25 years of independence has been the Republic of China on Taiwan. Our relationship has been exemplary and is characterized by mutual respect, solidarity and a desire for international peace, in accordance with the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Taiwan, a magnificent political expression of the Chinese civilization, has partnered beautifully with Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, a component of our Caribbean civilization. We unequivocally support the quest of Taiwan to be represented at the United Nations and other international bodies. It is unfair, unreasonable and irrational to exclude a country of 23 million persons, with a thriving economy and a nobility of purpose, from the United Nations. Further, we urge the United Nations to take the lead in promoting constructive dialogue and friendly engagement between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China on Taiwan. Bellicose conduct across the Taiwan Strait cannot be condoned in a world striving for enhanced peace and collective security.

Let me end by expressing the hope that the United Nations may achieve, in the next 60 years, greater and greater success in its goals of bringing hope to the hopeless, providing food for the hungry and spreading peace, stability and sustainability for now and forever. Let this not be the road less travelled.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Ralph E. Gonsalves, Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I now call on the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bahrain.

Mr. Al-Khalifa (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my pleasure to congratulate you upon your election as President of the General Assembly during its historic sixtieth session. I am fully confident that you will lead its deliberations towards a successful conclusion. I also would like to express my appreciation for the contribution of the Foreign Minister of Gabon during the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. I commend the efforts of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, who has sought to make significant changes to this Organization so as to make it better able to meet the demands of the twenty-first century, as envisaged in his report and in his recommendations before this session.

The historical context of the creation of our current international order, with its mechanisms and institutions, is a part of a world different from that of today. That world preceded both the cold war and subsequent events, developments and changes in regional and international arenas. Our session this year is, in essence, an important moment in the progress of international collective efforts, prompting us today to seek a new vision and to find systems that are better developed in both their means and structures, in order to address contemporary dangers and threats, as well as rapid world changes.

The world today is witnessing many changes that are due to the interdependence of States and to various facts, balances and dangers around the world. As a result, we are obliged to revisit the international collective security system, to thoroughly study the concepts and structures of the United Nations and to provide creative initiatives to address such matters in the twenty-first century spirit of modernity. His Highness Shaikh Salman bin Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa, the Crown Prince, underlined this issue in his address on behalf of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa, King of Bahrain, before the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on 15 September 2005.

These might be the urgent needs that prompted the Secretary-General to crystallize all this in a series of initiatives and meetings at the beginning of the third millennium, by announcing suggestions for the millennium and its development goals. In his important report to this session, entitled "In larger freedom" (A/59/2005), the Secretary-General explained his vision in a comprehensive and in-depth manner, along with the bases and aims of the work of the international order of our world today. Based on this order we can move towards a modern, capable and democratic system to achieve the three important types of freedom, namely freedom to live in dignity, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. This comprehensive vision of the Secretary-General on issues of international security, development and human rights deserves commendation and thorough and deep analysis in order to reach a broad international consensus.

The dangerous escalation today in terrorism and its culture, derived from hatred and fanaticism, are the most serious dangers threatening the international community everywhere. They require us to develop an integrated strategy that halts terrorism and the culture of death and violence that terrorism advocates. This also re-emphasizes the common responsibility of States and societies to find a means to address the root causes of terrorism.

We must state that an effective counter-terrorism strategy has to balance the needs of human security and adherence to international human rights instruments and treaties, and has to close loopholes in treaties dealing with the phenomenon of terrorism.

In this context, the Kingdom of Bahrain has continued its domestic efforts and its efforts in the Gulf Region with its partner Gulf Cooperation Council countries to fight money-laundering and the financing of terrorism in the Middle East and North Africa geographically, and on the security cooperation level, politically and practically. In this regard, the Kingdom of Bahrain endorses and supports the proposal of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdulla Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, King of the brotherly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, to establish an international centre to fight terrorism. The Kingdom of Bahrain has also submitted its instruments of accession to the United Nations Secretariat in New York for many conventions relating to the fight against terrorism, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1373 (2001).

The greatest security challenge in the Middle East is not simply to end terrorism and violence; it also

includes the absence of a just and comprehensive peace in the Arab-Israeli conflict, which is an ongoing source of confrontation and a threat to stability and which brings despair to those who have legitimate hopes for a life of dignity and regional economic progress.

We must not forget that the year 2005 has opened a path that might lead to an opportunity for peace, through the positive internal developments on the Palestinian side and through Arab and international support for the new leadership of President Mahmood Abbas and his moves towards achieving peace, reducing tension, and promoting democracy.

We welcome the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and hope that this withdrawal will be a significant step towards a just and comprehensive peace in the area. We also hope that this withdrawal will be a part of the road map plan.

The achievement of security, stability and peace in the Middle East requires an end to the Israeli occupation of all Arab territories and the full implementation of all relevant United Nations resolutions, as reaffirmed by the Arab initiative adopted by the Arab Summit in Beirut in 2002. That was reaffirmed once again by the latest Arab Summit held this year in Algiers. A just and comprehensive peace cannot be achieved, except through the end of the Israeli occupation of the Arab territories occupied since 1967, including the Syrian Golan and the rest of the Lebanese territories, through the return of Palestinian refugees and through the establishment of the Palestinian State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Notwithstanding the democratic choice of the Iraqi people in the elections last January and the appointment of a transitional Government and in spite of the steps taken during the political process and the preparation of the draft constitution, the situation in Iraq today remains very delicate and sensitive. It represents a challenge to international and regional security. It threatens not only the security of Iraq and the region, but also Iraq's unity, its territorial integrity, cohesion and the consensus of its people.

Overcoming this dilemma can be achieved only through a strong historical national consensus on Iraq's territorial integrity and ethnic diversity, a comprehensive political process and participation in shaping the future of Iraq. This national consensus alone is the guarantee for Iraq to overcome its current predicament and to move from this difficult ordeal to an era of stability, security and peace.

In this context, the Kingdom of Bahrain reaffirms its support for the Iraqi people and calls upon all to continue regional and international support for Iraq in order that it may fulfil its responsibilities towards its people and the Arab nation as a whole.

In the context of regional security in the Gulf region, the peaceful settlement, either through negotiations or international arbitration, of the long dispute between the United Arab Emirates and its brother, the Islamic Republic of Iran, regarding the three Emirate islands, especially now that there is a new Iranian leadership, will enable the Gulf region to divert its efforts and natural resources to face the challenges of development, security, peace and cooperation.

In the area of development and progress, the Kingdom of Bahrain has followed a policy of openness, reform and participation and democracy enhancement, moving towards social, cultural and civil modernization that goes hand in hand with our culture, deep-rooted traditions and values.

In the context of its efforts to fulfil the Millennium Development Goals, the Kingdom of Bahrain has taken significant steps to enable women to assume positions of leadership in various walks of life, by launching a new national strategy to promote Bahraini women. Accordingly, in putting forward its candidature for the presidency of the forthcoming sixty-first session of the General Assembly, it has selected a capable person who represents Bahraini women, and who demonstrates experience, wisdom and diplomatic skill. We hope that this nomination will receive wide agreement among Member States.

Reaffirming its regional and international status as an economic, financial and banking centre and as part of its efforts to attract greater investment and capital, create employment opportunities for its citizens and strengthen the national economy, the Kingdom of Bahrain has embarked on many major economic and investment projects that will strengthen and enhance the economic and trade position of Bahrain at the regional and international levels.

Efforts and initiatives have continued over many decades to achieve a collective security system that will free humanity from the dangers of destruction and

annihilation by prohibiting the proliferation of nuclear weapons. However, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has not achieved its goals despite accession by the majority of countries of the world, including all Arab countries. In this regard, we call upon the international community to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in both the Middle East and the Gulf region.

We hope that sincere and concerted efforts will continue among Member States to reach a consensus on the reform of the Organization.

We trust that the framework of the proposed expansion of the Security Council will reflect the consensus of Member States with a clear and realistic vision and will take into account the interests and expectations of the Arab nations with their profound influence on the political stability, economy, peace and security in the whole world.

The recommendations put forward by the Secretary-General in his report "In larger freedom" (A/59/2005) represent comprehensive and ambitious views and aspirations in relation not only to the Security Council, which is entrusted by the Charter with the maintenance of international peace and security, but also to establishing the basis for the entire international system.

We all look forward, during this session, to the opening of historic negotiations on the reforms of United Nations organs as well as on working methods. The Kingdom of Bahrain supports the United Nations reform initiative and believes in the necessity of continued negotiations and discussions among Member States in order to reach the results that we all aspire to.

The world today, this post-cold-war world, is not yet free of the scourge of war, and its people are still vulnerable to the consequences of terrorism and violence.

Today, we urgently need a more modern, stronger, reinvigorated and more credible Organization: an Organization that will bring all nations together and balance their interests, resolve conflicts, build peace and security, uphold justice and the rule of law, oblige all to abide by the provisions of the Charter and international legal resolutions, adapt to the changes of the twenty-first century and meet successfully its challenges.

We look forward to a reformed United Nations, which we hope will come into existence soon.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Li Zhaoxing, Minister for Foreign Affairs of China.

Mr. Li Zhaoxing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): May I begin by extending my congratulations on your election as the President of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. I am confident that under your guidance this session will achieve fruitful results. I also wish to take this opportunity to express my sincere respects to Mr. Jean Ping, President at the previous session, and to the Secretary-General.

This year marks the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the world war against fascism and the founding of the United Nations. Just a few days ago in this Hall, world leaders solemnly adopted the outcome document of the High-level Plenary Meeting (resolution 60/1). Now, it falls to us to fulfil the important and pressing task of working towards a harmonious world of lasting peace and common prosperity by translating that document into action and turning fine words into reality. This session should serve to promote peace, harmony and common development.

We want peaceful development. Progress of mankind needs a peaceful environment. Stability and security of one country cannot be built on the turbulence or crisis of another. Only a new security concept featuring mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and coordination will enable us to develop in peace and safeguard peace through development.

We want harmonious development. To build a better future is the long-cherished dream of mankind. Any development strategy should be guided by a long-term and holistic perspective instead of immediate and sectoral benefits. Therefore, we should work together for more democratic and law-based international relations and a harmonious environment in which countries respect one another, treat one another as equals, and in which different cultures can emulate and interchange with each other.

We want common development. No model of development that benefits only a few countries or a small group of people is acceptable or sustainable. Countries should cooperate with each other more closely so that economic globalization may yield successful results, benefit-sharing and common prosperity.

This session should serve to push forward reforms of the United Nations and strengthen its role. Having weathered 60 years of vicissitudes, the United Nations needs multifaceted and multidimensional reforms so as to be able to make a greater contribution to mankind's noble cause of peace and development.

The position of the United Nations as the core of the world collective security mechanism must be strengthened so that it can perform its duty of safeguarding peace in a more effective way. China supports the efforts to enhance the Organization's capacity on conflict prevention, mediation and good offices. We also favour a greater role by the Secretary-General in this respect and the fostering of a preventive culture.

We support the efforts to strengthen United Nations peacekeeping operations, particularly with regard to rapid deployment capacity and strategic preparedness, as well as the capacity to fully mobilize regional organizations and their resources under the leadership of the Security Council.

China supports the establishment of a Peacebuilding Commission to more effectively coordinate United Nations efforts in the areas of peacekeeping, post-conflict rehabilitation and development. In that respect, the Economic and Social Council and other development assistance agencies should have an important role to play in the Commission.

It has been our consistent position to oppose the use or threat of force in international relations. We do not support the reinterpretation or revision of the provisions in the Charter of the United Nations related to the right of self-defence. Should an occasion arise that calls for the use of force, it is the Security Council that should make sound judgements and take prudent decisions as to the merits of the situation.

The international community should continue to press ahead with the international process on arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation; safeguard and enhance the authority and effectiveness of existing multilateral treaties; give full scope to the role of the United Nations and other international organizations in the area of non-proliferation; and seek solutions to related issues by political and diplomatic means.

The United Nations should be able to cope more effectively with non-traditional security threats. We welcome the comprehensive strategy on counter-terrorism proposed by the Secretary-General, and we hope to see the early conclusion of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism, taking full account of the concerns of various parties, particularly developing countries.

In the effort to reduce and prevent large-scale humanitarian crises, the international community should strictly observe the United Nations Charter, respect the opinions of the countries or organizations concerned and, with the Security Council's authorization, explore, to the greatest extent possible, peaceful settlement within the United Nations framework. We oppose any rash intervention carried out on the basis of the claim that a nation is unable or unwilling to protect its own citizens.

Development should be a main focus of United Nations reform. Although China is a low-income developing country, it is prepared to contribute as much as it can to international cooperation for development. As President Hu Jintao announced at the summit, China will take substantive steps in five areas. We will join hands with all Members to advance reforms in the area of development so as to facilitate the resolution of development issues. The United Nations should put in place a fair and rational Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) review framework to assess progress made in various countries and to monitor follow-up of international cooperation and aid commitments. We support the coordinating role of the Economic and Social Council in development-related areas.

The Doha Round should embody development in its focus, paying more attention and taking actions to address the concerns of developing countries, particularly with regard to agricultural produce and special and differential treatment. China has decided to grant zero-tariff treatment to some commodities from 39 least developed countries, which will cover the majority of China's imports from those countries.

China is in favour of incorporating the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS and the building of the public health sector into the development programmes and activities of various countries and of the United Nations. We will be submitting at the current session a draft resolution on strengthening global capacity-building in the area of public health. In the next three years, we plan to provide more aid and medicine to

developing countries for preventing and treating malaria and other communicable diseases and to help them establish and reform their public health systems and train medical personnel.

The international community — particularly developed countries — should take substantive steps to help developing countries break the vicious circle of debt. Such steps include substantial debt reduction and the streamlining of debt relief procedures and requirements. In the next two years, China will write off or otherwise cancel the overdue portions, as of the end of 2004, of interest-free or low-interest Government loans owed by all heavily indebted poor countries having diplomatic relations with China.

We call on the United Nations to give priority to helping developing countries to strengthen their capacity-building. China will help developing countries train 30,000 people for various professions in the next three years.

My country also favours setting a timetable for developed countries to allocate 0.7 per cent of their gross national income to official development assistance. New fund-raising methods should be explored so as to put more funds into development.

China pledges $10 billion in concessional loans to developing countries in the next three years within the framework of South-South cooperation.

The Charter of the United Nations grants the Security Council the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. A highly efficient, responsible and representative Council serves the long-term interests of the United Nations and the common interests of all its Member States.

China supports reform of the Security Council aimed at strengthening its authority and efficiency and improving its working methods. The representation of developing countries, particularly African countries, should be increased so that small and medium-sized countries would have more say in the Council's decision-making. No reform proposal can work that addresses only the concerns of a few countries, disregarding the interests of the majority of countries, and treats developing countries in Africa and in other parts of the world unfairly.

China supports the principle of cooperation based on democratic consultation. As reform will affect the future of the United Nations and the interests of various parties, there should be no artificial timeframes or attempts to force decisions through a vote. Instead, Member States should seek consensus through dialogue and consultation and in accordance with the principle of democratic international relations.

China embraces the spirit of unity and cooperation. The United Nations family has 191 Members. Unity is the source of strength. We want unity, not division. As long as Member States respect one another's interests, accommodate one another's concerns and show pragmatism and flexibility, we will be able to find a reform path that is acceptable to all.

The current session should focus on Africa. African countries make up a quarter of the United Nations membership, and their populations account for 13 per cent of the world's total population. If there is no stability in Africa, the world will have no peace. If Africa remains poor, there will be no development for the world. The outcome document of the summit calls for efforts to meet the special needs of Africa. I believe that that is correct and necessary.

Despite the gratifying progress made in Africa in recent years, conflicts in some of its regions have persisted. The Security Council should pay special attention to African problems and give them priority on its agenda. That means not only devoting more Council meetings to African issues, but also, and more important, taking concrete actions to heed Africa's voice, respect its views and accommodate its concerns.

China applauds the mediation and good offices of the African Union and other regional organizations aimed at conflict settlement in Africa. We support close cooperation between the Security Council and those organizations by providing them with funds, logistics and technical assistance to strengthen their peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction capacities.

African countries face difficulties in the area of development, particularly in attaining the MDGs. More than 300 million people are still living under the poverty line. One third of all children are malnourished. More than 30 million people are suffering from HIV/AIDS. With less than 2 per cent of the world's economic aggregate, Africa is weighed down by debts amounting to $300 billion. All of that poses a challenge to the conscience of mankind.

The international community should reach a global consensus on African development and help the continent to achieve the MDGs on schedule by implementing the New Partnership for Africa's Development. Those who provide assistance must do so in all sincerity and respect the right of African countries to make their own decisions. Assistance must also have a clear aim: to meet the basic and long-term needs of the African people. Assistance is by no means charity or a gift; it is a response to the call for mutual benefit and common development. Furthermore, it is our moral duty to help the needy and redress injustices.

In the twentieth century, Africa shook off colonial rule and achieved national liberation. That was an epoch-making event. The twenty-first century will bring peace and development to Africa — it is historically inevitable. The Chinese people will continue to stand beside their African brothers and sisters on that journey of historic significance.

The recently concluded Six-Party Talks in Beijing on the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue have reached an important consensus and issued a joint declaration, marking an important step forward in the Talks and a crystallization of the political will and diligence of the parties concerned. It also reflects the common aspiration of the international community. Because it was so hard-won, this result needs to be especially prized. We hope that the parties will continue to work together to promote further progress in the Six-Party Talks, resolve the nuclear issue on the Peninsula through dialogue and by peaceful means, ensure lasting peace and stability in the region and realize its common goals for development and prosperity. The Chinese Government will continue to make a positive contribution in that regard.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Felipe Pérez Roque, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba.

Mr. Pérez Roque (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Actually, we have no reason to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations. The chaotic, unequal and insecure world in which we are now living is not much of a tribute to those who gathered on 26 June 1945 in San Francisco to found the United Nations.

From the conclusion of the Millennium Summit in 2000 until today, more of the world's children have died of preventable diseases than all of the victims of the Second World War put together.

The aggression against Iraq was launched, not just without regard to, but even counter to the opinion of the international community. That happened just two and a half years after having solemnly proclaimed at the Millennium Summit that "We are determined to establish a just and lasting peace all over the world in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter" (*resolution 55/2, para. 4*). The General Assembly could not even meet to discuss it. The Security Council was ignored and then had to undergo the humiliation of docilely accepting a predatory war that had earlier been opposed by a majority of its members.

There is a clear explanation for the current state of affairs, which is that the order enshrined in the Charter pertained to a bipolar world and to a balance of power that no longer exists today. "We, the peoples" — as the Charter says — must bear the burden of a unipolar world, in which a single super-Power imposes its whims and selfish interests on the United Nations and the international community.

Therefore, trying to get the United Nations to function in conformity with the principles and purposes enshrined in the Charter is make-believe. It is not possible. And it will not be possible as long as third world countries, which make up the majority of the world, fail to unite and fight together for their rights.

Were the United States Government to comply with Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), adopted on 28 September 2001, and to the international conventions on terrorism, it would extradite the terrorist Luis Posada Carriles to Venezuela and release the five young Cuban anti-terrorist fighters who have been subjected to cruel and unjust imprisonment for seven years.

Had the United States Government allowed the United Nations to act in accordance with the Charter, the Iraqi people would not have been invaded so that they could be robbed of their petroleum, the Palestinian people would exercise sovereignty over their territory and Cuba would not continue to be blockaded. Nor would there be billions of illiterate people or 900 million starving human beings in the world.

That explains the failure of last week's summit, which was convened to assess compliance with the

modest commitments entered into to fulfil the Millennium Development Goals and which ended as a pitiful imitation of what should have been a serious and committed debate concerning the grave problems currently besetting humankind. It was a complete farce. It was of no interest to the powerful. Their selfish and hegemonic interests run counter to the aspiration for a more just and better world for all.

The scandalous pressures and blackmail brought to bear on Member States, after the United States Ambassador brandished the stick and attempted to impose 750 amendments on the outcome document, will go down in history as the most eloquent evidence that a new world and a new United Nations must be built, with respect for and recognition of the right to peace, sovereignty and development for all, without genocidal wars, blockades or injustice. The final negotiations, from which most United Nations Members were excluded, and the outcome document that was adopted, in which issues of vital interest for our peoples have been omitted, is a vivid illustration of what we are talking about.

While we await the day in which that new world and the new United Nations can become a reality, we, the peoples, will continue to fight and, through our resistance, win once again the rights currently denied to us.

The powerful only talk about interventions and preventive wars, about imposing draconian conditions or the most efficient ways to control the United Nations, while attempting to legitimize concepts such as the so-called responsibility to protect, which could be used one day to justify acts of aggression against our countries. Let us spell this out clearly: today there is no right to peace for the small.

We as Cubans understand this very well, and we rely on the solidarity of peoples, on our united front and on our weapons, which have never been used except to defend just causes. Our brothers and sisters in Africa know this well.

We are not pessimists; we are revolutionaries. We do not surrender or conform. Today, more resolutely than ever, we affirm that "we, the peoples" will overcome.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malaysia.

Mr. Albar (Malaysia): Malaysia, as the Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement and in its own name, wishes to convey our congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as the President of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. I am confident that, under your able stewardship, the work of the Assembly will reach a successful conclusion. I wish to assure you of the fullest cooperation of the Non-Aligned Movement and of the Malaysian delegation.

Let me also pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping, for his dedication and for the successful manner in which he conducted the work of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session, which was an exceptionally challenging one. The consultations and negotiations led to the successful adoption of the final outcome document at the world summit last Friday.

Six decades ago, the peoples of the world, including those under oppression and colonialism, celebrated the creation of the United Nations. The United Nations, as envisaged by its founders, was a beacon of hope for the world following the death and destruction wrought by the Second World War.

Malaysia fully and consistently subscribes to the centrality of the United Nations and thus to the multilateral principles which have allowed the evolution of an international order predicated on rule-based interaction among States, thus creating a predictable and stable international environment. Without multilateralism, small or weak States could not hope for a democratic international order within which they could aspire to independence, peace and stability, development and prosperity.

Today, even as we meet here, multilateralism has come under increasing threat. We believe that attempts to unilaterally rewrite or redefine the normative framework is a dangerous experiment. Without the stabilizing effect of such a framework, we would only create uncertainty and confusion in the international order.

The challenge confronting humankind in our time is to address, comprehensively and collectively, the multifaceted threats to our survival and well-being in the areas of peace and security, poverty and development, human rights and democracy.

In that regard, the outcome document has sought to give a fresh lease on life to multilateralism, both in substance and in structure. As we continue our

discussions to reshape and redirect the Organization, we must ensure that the General Assembly remains the true embodiment of the will of the world community.

All of us must be committed to strengthening the General Assembly so that it reflects the true voice of democracy, transparency and accountability. At this juncture, let me voice Malaysia's support for the checklist of items to be implemented during the current session, as mapped out by the Secretary-General in his address last Saturday. I hope that, by the time we meet again next year, the Secretary-General's report will be able to illustrate a marked improvement in the world situation, in particular towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 and the greater efficiency and effectiveness of the Secretariat.

Driven by a common sense of purpose and determined political will, we must operationalize the commitments we have undertaken at the major United Nations conferences and summits of recent years. Our words must be matched by our actions. This must represent the beginning of the collective redoubling of efforts that is necessary to secure a more peaceful and just world. Where we had been unable to push the agenda on certain issues, we must now pursue them as part of an ongoing process in the reform of the United Nations. Where efforts to reach agreement have failed altogether, such as on the issue of disarmament and non-proliferation, we must now focus our energies in order to keep the issues alive until we achieve consensus.

Malaysia is disappointed by the absence of any reference to disarmament and non-proliferation in the outcome document. I hope that this is not construed as a loss of interest by the international community or as an indication that it has since fallen off our radar of concern. Our collective call for nuclear-weapon States to effect complete and general disarmament as well as to ensure the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons must not be compromised.

It is indeed regrettable that the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) earlier this year failed. That failure will intensify the adverse repercussions on the disarmament regime, painstakingly negotiated since the end of the Second World War. We must therefore, at this session, reiterate and, indeed, reaffirm the importance of the full and non-selective implementation of the three pillars of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, namely: nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear technology.

We must also rededicate our efforts towards the total elimination of all weapons of mass destruction.

The world spent an estimated $1 trillion on global military expenditures last year. Doubtless, much of that went to strengthening the military arsenals of States that feel constantly under threat; yet some of that must also have been contributed by terrorists purchasing arms for their condemnable acts. The sale of small arms and light weapons has wrought untold suffering on unsuspecting peoples everywhere. The international community must collectively call on States to divert such military spending to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and to strengthening the development infrastructure. This would go far towards creating a just and equitable order, which in turn would lead to a safer world.

Since the adoption of the MDGs five years ago, the burdens and obstacles faced by developing countries seem to have increased, with almost no amelioration of the problems that already existed at the time. Eight years ago, East Asia was battered by a financial crisis, which in turn had trans-regional repercussions, adversely affecting the health of the global economy. Appeals by developing countries to reform the international financial architecture fell on deaf ears. As a result, the international financial architecture continues to be vulnerable to similar crises.

Now, even as that and other equally important problems remain unresolved, we are faced with yet another threat — a prolonged and sustained increase in oil prices, which, even as we speak, threatens to imperil the global economy. Continuous increases in oil prices are placing a disproportionate burden on developing countries, thereby impoverishing them even further. It is morally reprehensible that the poor are expected to absorb the cost of instabilities of production. In many quarters of the global community, the unbridled free market in particular is viewed as rapacious and unfeeling.

If the United Nations is to remain relevant to the world at large, it must be able to discuss and decide on precisely issues such as these, which not only have an impact on our day-to-day lives but also have long-term

implications, including for peace and security. If wars in the past were fought over ideology, conflicts in the future will be due to competition for markets and scarce natural resources, blurring the lines between economics, development and security. Accordingly, the United Nations must be prepared to address the interrelated and cross-cutting issues that give rise to such conflicts.

Globalization, with its myriad challenges and opportunities, has left many in the developing countries unable to compete in an open and free-market system. Following the current trajectory, the international economic system will continue to remain unjust, punishing the poor for being unable to influence, much less dictate, their destinies. Much remains to be done to equalize the field between the rich and the rest. Aid and debt cancellation, while they are welcome and reduce the burden on developing countries, have in the long term only limited effect. It is trade that needs to be expanded and made more fair and equitable. We must press ahead towards a universal, rule-based, open, non-discriminatory, fair and equitable multilateral trading system. It is widely recognized that trade has a multiplier effect and is able to lift poor communities towards becoming self-sustaining ones. Trade can create competitive markets that benefit all.

Malaysia condemns all acts, methods and practices of terrorism. As terrorism is a global phenomenon that transcends national boundaries, fighting terrorism demands effective international action in accordance with the Charter and universally recognized principles of international relations and international law.

In countering terrorism, the use of conventional military force alone is insufficient. To truly address the scourge and prevent its re-emergence elsewhere over time, we must deal with the root causes of terrorism in order to provide a lasting solution that will deny those committing such acts of violence sympathy and keep them from gaining new recruits. While countering their actions, we must at the same time win the hearts and minds of the people in order to ensure that our victory will not be short-lived.

No one group acting alone will be able to achieve total success. Clearly, success requires a sense of common purpose. The portrayal of any particular grouping of peoples as fanatical terrorists led by a religion of war is, therefore, irresponsible and would derail any attempt at forging a common and united front against terrorism. It is our collective duty to respond effectively to the legitimate grievances of affected communities, wherever they may be, so as to overcome their feelings of marginalization, deprivation, oppression and injustice. The international community as a whole must take a stand to stop actions that contribute directly or indirectly to the perpetuation of injustice, oppression or aggression. Misunderstanding and fear of "the other" must be replaced by respect, dialogue, understanding and tolerance. In this context, we can build a universal culture that respects diversity so that goodwill and harmony can thrive.

The interests and concerns of minority groups must not be sidelined in favour of the majority. Minorities too have rights that must be protected by their Government. Over time, the grievances of minority groups over their being sidelined will necessarily seek an outlet.

There is a national as well as an international dimension to the issue of peaceful and cooperative co-existence. Understanding and respect between religions, cultures and civilizations become necessary prerequisites for dialogue and the avoidance of conflicts. If Governments can succeed in instituting a culture of tolerance and moderation among people at the domestic level, it will become easier for nation States to cooperate in promoting tolerance and moderation among nationalities and cultures at the international level. We must institute the precepts of justice, respect and understanding in our day-to-day dealings. This would, in turn, lead to fairness, goodwill and harmony in our relations.

The ideas of good governance, democracy and accountability to God and our peoples are not antithetical to Islam. They are clearly embodied in the Koran and the traditions of the Prophet Mohammed. For our own part in Malaysia, we believe that the obligation to act based on religious imperatives can be directed towards good, progress and development. We call this approach Islam Hadhari, literally civilizational Islam, which is an approach towards a progressive and humanistic civilization that is consistent with the objective of creating a stable international world order.

The approach that Malaysia has taken emphasizes that progress, development, knowledge and good

governance as enshrined in the teachings of Islam, are compatible with modernity and yet are firmly rooted in the ethical, moral and universal values that will guarantee the future of humankind. It is an approach that values substance over form and promotes tolerance and understanding, moderation and peace, and certainly, enlightenment.

In our preoccupation with the reform of the United Nations, we must not lose sight of the need to address and resolve, on a priority basis, one of the most important outstanding issues confronting this Organization: the question of Palestine. While we all welcome the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, it should be part of the Road Map and should be quickly followed by similar measures in the West Bank. The issue of settlements must not be left unresolved, including in and around Jerusalem, as well as the construction of the Separation Wall, which has already been pronounced illegal by the International Court of Justice. Such activities must cease forthwith. The international community, particularly the United Nations, must continue to remain engaged with this issue until the goal of an independent and sovereign State of Palestine is realized.

Rich or poor, strong or weak, whatever our religion or belief, one fact is inescapable: we inhabit one world, our global village. Sixty years ago, the founders of our universal Organization came together after witnessing horrors hitherto unimaginable and said that never again could human life be so wantonly extinguished. They also proclaimed that humankind would forevermore work and live together in peace, harmony and common respect. On this historic occasion, my plea is that we return to those hopes and ideals.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Rashid Abdullah Al-Noaimi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates.

Mr. Al-Noaimi (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my pleasure to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your election to the Presidency of this session, which coincides with the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations. We hope that this important session will provide a historic opportunity to review and evaluate the achievements of this Organization and to formulate a political and development vision on strengthening our common action and our ability to maintain international peace and security and achieve sustainable development.

The United Arab Emirates welcomes the Outcome Document of the High-level Plenary Meeting and considers it a positive step towards achieving the MDGs, especially those related to the four main fields, namely development, peace and collective security, human rights, rule of law and the strengthening of the United Nations. At the same time, we hope that our consultations on other unsolved issues will continue in order to reach an international consensus.

In that context, we wish to reaffirm our position calling for the reform of the United Nations, including the increase of permanent and non-permanent membership of the Security Council, based on a system of equitable geographical distribution that ensures the transparency of the Council's working methods.

We emphasize the importance of reinforcing international commitment to the principles of international and humanitarian law and respect for the sovereignty of States, including their cultural and religious diversity and traditions. We also underline the need to respect the resolutions and recommendations of international legitimacy issued by world summits, including the Millennium Declaration.

We affirm that the challenges of the twenty-first century, including poverty, illiteracy, epidemics, environmental degradation, global terrorism, organized crime and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, are by nature transnational and pose grave threats to all humanity. Therefore, while we supported the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, which will assist countries recovering from civil and regional wars, we call for the utilization of our human cultures and beliefs in joint efforts to address such challenges, including the holding of an international conference on combating terrorism and its causes. Such a conference must provide a clear definition of terrorism, based on the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law and norms, and must distinguish between terrorism and the legitimate struggle of peoples against foreign occupation. At the same time, we reaffirm our support for the proposal of the brotherly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to establish an international centre to combat terrorism.

Firmly convinced of the importance of adopting peaceful solutions in resolving disputes and issues of foreign occupation, particularly in the Middle East and

the Arab Gulf region, the United Arab Emirates calls upon the Islamic Republic of Iran to respond to its peaceful initiatives aimed at resolving the issue of Iran's occupation of the three islands of the United Arab Emirates — Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa — through bilateral negotiations or by referral to the International Court of Justice.

In that context, we reaffirm that all actions taken by Iran since its illegal occupation of the three islands in 1971 are null and void, because they contradict the United Nations Charter, international law, the principles of good neighbourliness and the peaceful coexistence of nations and confidence-building measures. In the light of the impact of that important and delicate issue on the security and the stability of the Arab Gulf region and on the entire world, the United Arab Emirates, along with other countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, looks forward to the Iranian Government's review of its policy in that regard. We also hope that Iran will take a transparent and objective approach in its response to the repeated peaceful initiatives of the countries of the region, which call for the end of Iran's occupation of the three islands belonging to the United Arab Emirates and the creation of a positive regional environment conducive to the strengthening of cooperation, good neighbourliness and mutual advantage among the region's countries and to prosperity and stability for its peoples.

We are hopeful that the political transition process in Iraq will be completed and, in that respect, we renew our support for all efforts made by the Iraqi Government to strengthen political dialogue among the various Iraqi factions, achieve national reconciliation and rebuild its national institutions so that Iraq can maintain its unity, territorial sovereignty, independence and stability, and can play its natural role in the region and the world.

The United Arab Emirates welcomes Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and parts of the northern West Bank and hopes that the international community will urge Israel to complete its withdrawal from the Arab and Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, including the Syrian Golan and the Lebanese Shaba'a farms, dismantle the separation wall and discontinue its settlement plans and activities, in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy, the Arab peace initiative based on the land-for-peace principle, and the Quartet's road map. Furthermore, the international community must strengthen its support of the Palestinian Authority and help it rebuild its national institutions and exploit its natural and economic resources.

We also demand that Israel accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and submit its nuclear facilities to the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions calling for the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, in the Middle East and the Arab Gulf region.

In spite of the progress made in science and information technology, the international community continues to face a growing economic gap between the North and the South. Therefore, we call for further international efforts to address that imbalance, including the greater participation of developing countries in decision-making in economic and trade matters, and for the commitment of industrialized States to continue their support for development programmes in the developing countries in order to create a fair and just international economic environment in which all peoples enjoy the benefits of prosperity, well-being and development.

The United Arab Emirates has developed humanitarian and financial assistance programmes to assist developing countries and countries affected by conflicts, civil and regional wars and natural disasters. That assistance exceeds the percentage recommended by international conferences on development and the Millennium Development Goals. In that context, the United Arab Emirates has adopted multifaceted development policies and plans to keep pace with international economic and development changes. Those policies include human resources development, the opening of the country's markets to foreign trade and the enhancement of the private sector's role in national development.

In conclusion, we hope that our deliberations at this session will result in a positive outcome that strengthens our joint efforts to realize our peoples' hope and ambition to live in a world in which security, stability, peace, freedom and justice prevail.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Jean-François Ndongou, Deputy Minister to the Minister of State, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Francophonie of Gabon.

Mr. Ndongou (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, your election to the presidency of this session of the General Assembly is indisputably an historic moment, which Gabon appreciates fully, since your country has succeeded Gabon in this post. Thus, I should like to congratulate you most warmly on behalf of my delegation and assure you of Gabon's support throughout your term. I should also like to express my gratitude to the Secretary-General for his immense, bold and tireless actions in favour of the reinvigoration and the restoration of the prestige of the United Nations system. Allow me also to pay well-deserved tribute to the President of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping, Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Francophonie of the Republic of Gabon, for his outstanding contribution to the reform of our Organization.

The important document adopted last Friday by the High-level Meeting testifies to this reform effort. I therefore welcome the fact that you have invited us to focus our debate on the follow-up to the measures adopted by the world leaders last week.

Today, 60 years after its creation, the United Nations has stood the test of time. The dysfunctions noted recently highlight the need to press ahead with essential institutional reform. In that connection, a comment by Montesquieu comes to mind and I quote, "When a good thing has disadvantages, it is better to do away with the disadvantages than with the thing itself." The author of *The Spirit of Laws* was suggesting that we need to make a distinction between ideals and human endeavour.

More than an end in itself, the reform process must, whenever necessary, make it possible to adapt the United Nations to the demands of the times and to the many complex mandates entrusted to it. In this context, we should pay particular attention to the General Assembly. It is the most representative forum of the international community, a site par excellence for cooperation, for negotiation and for sharing responsibilities.

The United Nations is the seat of legitimacy and moral authority at the international level and it participates in the ideal of shared destinies of nations and the peoples of the world. This is why Gabon reiterates yet again its support for initiatives aimed at a consensus-based reform of the Security Council, as the Council's expansion should derive from the dual need for representativity and effectiveness.

Once reformed, the United Nations can deal better with the many challenges facing humankind today, such as HIV/AIDS, environmental degradation, terrorism, armed conflicts and poverty. The HIV/AIDS pandemic, which affects rich and poor nations alike without distinction, is a serious threat to sparsely-populated countries such as Gabon. More than ever, developing countries call upon the international community to display effective and active solidarity in order to limit the worst effects of this pandemic.

Since vaccine experiments have not yet been conclusive, and the therapeutic trials are still insufficient, efforts must be focused on prevention and on access to antiretroviral drugs in accordance with the agreement concluded within the context of the World Trade Organization. Gabon itself has taken solid initiatives, ranging from awareness campaigns to the implementation of action plans such as the multisectoral strategic plan to combat AIDS, in which the First Lady of Gabon, Madame Edith Lucie Bongo Ondimba, is personally involved. We welcome the fact that the final document of the High-level Meeting reaffirmed the commitment of the international community to fight HIV-AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases.

It is undeniable that the global challenges are numerous and interdependent. Environmental degradation has become one of the main threats to life on earth. The consequences of climate change caused by human activity are at the root of natural disasters that are unprecedented in scale. The future of generations to come is thus compromised. It is in this context that the concept of sustainable development, which means in fact intergenerational solidarity, must be made systematic, so as to underlie both public and private policies.

Certainly, the Stockholm conference in 1972 that led to the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme, the Rio Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 and the Johannesburg Conference in 2002 were important stages in the growing awareness of the international community. But, we can and must do better. The French proposal aimed at creating a United Nations organization for the environment, in addition to existing mechanisms, seems to us in this respect very

timely. We should ensure follow-up to this idea, as proposed by the final document of the High-level Meeting. Likewise, following an integrated approach, we support the actions taken by the International Organization of la Francophonie to promote the environment and sustainable development. The most recent Summit of Heads of State of la Francophonie, which was held in Ouagadougou from 26 to 27 November 2004, adopted a document along these lines entitled "A strategic ten-year framework for biodiversity and the protection of the environment throughout the francophone area".

The common heritage of the environment must be the subject of more ambitious and more generous international cooperation that seeks to reduce the gap between two sets of partners that often have contradictory expectations, that is, on the one hand, the developed countries, and, on the other, the developing countries.

What can we say about terrorism, that tentacled creature, that inscrutable threat, whose ubiquity evades vigilance and even punitive measures? Friendly countries have recently endured tragic experiences, and others, unfortunately, have them nearly every day. It has to be said that on 11 September 2001 terrorism sounded the death knell for any feeling of safety.

One of the notable points of the final documents of the High-level Meeting of last week is the firm and unambiguous condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. This is notable progress that will, I am sure, facilitate the efforts of the international community aimed at adopting a comprehensive convention on international terrorism, a task on which the sixtieth session of the General Assembly must focus and to which it must devote itself.

Wishing to support the efforts of the international community to stem this scourge, the Head of State of Gabon has just signed the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. "Peace within, peace with others and peace amongst others" is a tradition on which Gabon prides itself, a tradition that reflects the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

At the beginning of the third millennium, many African countries were still in the grip of instability and armed conflicts. To find a way out of that impasse and steer towards a more stable and prosperous Africa, African heads of State and Government set up mechanisms within the African Union such as the Peace and Security Council, which seeks to manage political crises and intra-State conflicts. The objective of the African States is to equip themselves with the means to ensure their own security. It is clear that regional mechanisms cannot manage indefinitely without bilateral agreements, multilateral cooperation and other relevant alliances. In this respect, allow me to commend the active role taken by the United Nations in maintaining peace in Africa, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire and the Sudan.

We also note with satisfaction NATO's willingness to accept the unprecedented invitation of the African Union, made by the Chairman of the Commission, Alpha Oumar Konaré.

Allow me also to stress here the role played by Gabon in all of these peace processes, which have resulted in a gradual improvement in the security situation on the continent. The President of the Republic of Gabon, El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba, has been fully involved, along with his African peers, in the resolution of African crises — consistently offering his good offices and mediation services whenever requested.

Given the current situation in the Sudan, with the tragic death of the Vice-President, John Garang, the international community as a whole must ensure that the ceasefire agreement signed in January 2005 holds — a necessary condition for the consolidation of peace and peacebuilding. I call on the parties concerned to respect their commitments in order that the peace process now under way may be concluded.

With respect to Central Africa, we welcome the relative calm seen in countries that were recently in crisis, particularly in the Central African Republic, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I should like here to welcome the conclusion of the electoral process in Burundi and to express thanks for the contribution made by the United Nations, the African Union and South Africa.

Gabon, which made its own modest contribution to the process, humbly encourages all of the new leaders to display political clear-sightedness and tolerance, with a view to the achievement of lasting peace. Their decision to create a Peacebuilding Commission will no doubt help to enhance the United Nations peacekeeping machinery.

As regards the economy, I need hardly recall that debt represents a major handicap for our countries. Indeed, nearly a third of our financial resources are devoted to debt servicing. Thus once again we would draw the attention of the international community to the specific situation involving the indebtedness of middle-income countries like Gabon.

Indeed, Gabon remains the only country in sub-Saharan Africa classified as a high-level middle-income country, thus making it ineligible for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative, despite the political and economic reforms under way for more than a decade. The current surge in the price of oil — our State's main budget resource — further fuels the illusion of a monetary surplus and does not really help us in the area of development financing, since the oil bonus basically goes to service external debt.

It is true that at the Gleneagles, United Kingdom, summit last July, endorsing the London Declaration of 11 June 2005, the G-8 countries and other donors undertook important commitments. Gabon, for its part, would like to see those commitments translated into action, so as to increase the likelihood of achieving the Millennium Development Goa. , to which my country is particularly committed.

I also welcome the fact that the summit's final document recognized the urgent need to redouble efforts to achieve development objectives agreed at the international level, including the Millennium Development Goals.

In conclusion, I should like to express the hope that the work of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session will be crowned with success, so that together we can work to bring about a community of peoples and nations living in peace, security and stability. May God inspire our work.

The President: I commend speakers for their discipline in abiding by the time limit for speeches.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.